

# **The Visible Intangible: an examination of the experience of turbid spaces**

by

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## Abstract

This project emerged on an airplane flight from the Tasmanian mainland to Flinders Island in 2011. After ascending through a whiteout, the cloudscape revealed was surprising, beautiful and uncannily similar to the earth-bound landscape below. The cloudscape now visible looked solid, but having just passed through this turbid space, it seemed impossible to grasp corporeally. How could it be imbued with fear and awe simultaneously? Is distance required in order to fully experience a turbid space?

I began research by literally immersing myself in fog: arising early in the morning to walk along the banks of the Tamar Estuary (chosen for its changeable atmospheric conditions), often surrounded by thick strata cloud. This was followed by experiences of driving through fog, in particular the Bridgewater Jerry radiation fog. I distilled these experiences of atmospheric, dense cloud and found that they incorporated the corporeal and concrete, sound, movement, the insubstantial and endlessness. In attempting to capture these and other abstract qualities, I was not undertaking a phenomenological enquiry but using visual methods, specifically painting.

My painting experiments involved a variety of media including Mylar, acrylic/polycarbonate, paper, mirrored board, oil paints, ink, pastels, liquid graphite, watercolour and enamel paint, plus gel and binder mediums. I narrowed the choice, through trial and error, to ink, watercolour, liquid graphite and enamel paint on paper, composite board and acrylic sheet. The earlier works reflect layering processes that were later refined to encompass not only the fluid mediums, but also the rigid framing support system. This layering emulates the formation of fog/cloud band: the space between the white layers acts like a liminal or suspended moment, one that I feel best describes the experience of being in turbidity.

I make reference to artists who compare the constant change to dense cloud such as Atelier Chan Chan and those who make artificial/man-made cloud: Fujiko Nakaya, Antony Gormley, Kurt Hentschlagel, Diller, Scofidio and Renfro and Berndnaut Smilde. Those who investigate the spatial qualities of turbidity include Jem Finer, while Rosemary Laing, Lesley Duxbury and writers Rohan Wilson and Danielle Wood explore atmospheric liminology. Klas Eriksson, Olafur Eliasson and architects Philippe Rahm and Peter Zumthor have a distinct interest in 'atmospheric' atmosphere, among others.

*The Visible Intangible* demonstrates a connection between the experience of turbidity through artistic representations and the medium of paint. It also emphasises the human desire to reinstate oneself at a distance from thick, dense cloud, in order to find direction and context.

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## **CONTENTS**

Signed statement of originality	i
Signed statement of authority of access to copying	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of figures	vi

## **INTRODUCTION**

**1**

### **CHAPTER 1**

**12**

Light and Sight

### **CHAPTER 2**

**35**

Atmosphere or Atmospheric?

### **CHAPTER 3**

**49**

Experiencing Turbidity

### **CHAPTER 4**

**68**

Being Lost

## **CONCLUSION**

**83**

## **REFERENCES**

**92**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**98**

## **APPENDIX**

**107**

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1      Claude Monet  
*Poplars along the River Epte, Autumn*, 1891  
 Oil on canvas, 100 x 65 cm  
 Source: [www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet/poplars-epte/](http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/monet/poplars-epte/)
- Figure 2      Claude Monet  
*Haystacks at Chailly, sunrise*, 1865  
 Oil on canvas, 30 x 60 cm  
 Source: [www.monetalia.com/paintings/monet-haystacks-at-chailly-at-sunrise.aspx](http://www.monetalia.com/paintings/monet-haystacks-at-chailly-at-sunrise.aspx)
- Figure 3      Helene Weeding  
*Turbidity Study*, May 2013  
 Watercolour, ink, PVA glue, enamel paint on paper, 55 x 76 cm
- Figure 4      Helene Weeding  
*Turbidity Study*, April 2013  
 Watercolour, ink, PVA glue, enamel paint on paper, 55 x 76 cm
- Figure 5      Tourism Western Australia  
*Staircase to the Moon*, 2013  
 Source: [www.weekendnoted.com/staircase-to-the-moon](http://www.weekendnoted.com/staircase-to-the-moon)
- Figure 6      Michael Dahlem  
*Mirage west of Burren Junction*, September 2011  
 Source: [www.nbnweathershots.com.au/content/mirage-west-burren-junction](http://www.nbnweathershots.com.au/content/mirage-west-burren-junction)
- Figure 7      Helene Weeding  
*Liminal Landscape #4*, 2015  
 Ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board, 1220 x 1630 cm
- Figure 8      Diller, Scofidio & Renfro  
*Blur Building*, 2002  
 World Expo, Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland  
 Source: [www.unit03-metamorphosis.blogspot.com](http://www.unit03-metamorphosis.blogspot.com)
- Figure 9      Antony Gormley  
*Blind Light*, 2007  
 Glass, oscillating ultrasonic humidifiers, 8 x 10 m  
 Source: [www.antonygormley.com/uploads/images/0733\\_blindlight\\_2007](http://www.antonygormley.com/uploads/images/0733_blindlight_2007)
- Figure 10      Michaela Gleave  
*Cloud Field (Föhn Bank)*, 2007  
 Timber, plasterboard, harvested rainfall, ultrasonic misting units, water distribution system, fluorescent lighting  
 Source: [www.db-artmag.com/en/56/news/primavera-2009](http://www.db-artmag.com/en/56/news/primavera-2009)

- Figure 11      Fujiko Nakaya  
*Living Chasm*, 2012  
 Cockatoo Island, Sydney  
 Source: [www.sydneycool.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2012/06/sydney-biennale-2012](http://www.sydneycool.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2012/06/sydney-biennale-2012)
- Figure 12      Helene Weeding  
 Examples of layering process for painting experiments with fog/mist, February/March 2013  
 Watercolour, ink, PVA glue, 56 x 76 cm (each)
- Figure 13      Helene Weeding  
 Completed painting, February/March 2013  
 Watercolour, ink, PVA glue, enamel paint, 56 x 76 cm
- Figure 14      Helene Weeding  
*Cloud Play #16*, 2012  
 Polycarbonate sheets, oil, enamel, LED light, wire, switch, 60 x 60 x 6 cm
- Figure 15      Philippe Rahm  
*Convective Apartments*, 2010  
 Hamburg, Germany  
 Source: <http://www.philipperahm.com/data/projects/convective/apartments/>
- Figure 16      Peter Zumthor  
*LACMA*, 2013  
 Los Angeles, California  
 Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/368959/peter-zumthor-proposes>
- Figure 17      Klas Eriksson  
*Mono Colored Atmosphere*, 2012  
 Copenhagen, Denmark  
 Source: [farm9.staticflickr.com/8294/786424374\\_ec05a6bcc3.jpg](http://farm9.staticflickr.com/8294/786424374_ec05a6bcc3.jpg)
- Figure 18      Olafur Eliasson  
*Your natural denudation inverted*, 1999  
 Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
 Steam, water, basin, scaffolding, trees, 15 x 25 m  
 Source: Birnbaum 2002, p. 10
- Figure 19      Helene Weeding  
 Fluidity experiments, February 2013  
 Ink, oil paint, turpentine, damar varnish, 58 x 41 cm (each)
- Figure 20      Helene Weeding  
 Turbidity studies showing second and third layers, April 2013  
 Watercolour, ink, PVA glue, enamel paint, 56 x 76 cm
- Figure 21      Helene Weeding  
 Experiments with small paper, January 2014  
 Acrylic paint on paper, 183 x 27 cm (top), ink and watercolour on paper, 124.5 x 18 cm (bottom)



- Figure 22 Helene Weeding  
Digital photograph of windows in postgraduate studio,  
May 2014
- Figure 23 Helene Weeding  
Cloud study series, September – March 2015  
Acrylic, pencil, white pen on paper, 19 x 14 cm (each), total of  
37
- Figure 24 David Martin  
*Sunpicture*, 2001–2004  
Type C photograph, 127 x 127 cm  
Source: [www.castgallery.org](http://www.castgallery.org)
- Figure 25 Philip Wölfhagen  
*Third Exaltation*, 2011  
Oil and beeswax on linen, 3 x 3 m  
Source: [www.landscapesoftheself.blogspot.com/2012/philip-wolfhagen.html](http://www.landscapesoftheself.blogspot.com/2012/philip-wolfhagen.html)
- Figure 26 John Constable  
*Cloud Study*, 1821  
Oil on paper laid down on board, 61 x 46 cm  
Source: [www.cache2.artprintimages.com](http://www.cache2.artprintimages.com)
- Figure 27 JMW Turner  
*Snow Storm – Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842  
Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm  
Source: [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org)
- Figure 28 Olafur Eliasson  
*The Weather Project*, 2003  
Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London  
Source: [www.untitledweblog.tumblr.com/post/46428730270/slowartday-olafur-eliasson-the-weather](http://www.untitledweblog.tumblr.com/post/46428730270/slowartday-olafur-eliasson-the-weather)
- Figure 29 Francis Ford Coppola  
*Apocalypse Now: Redux*, 2000  
Source: [www.residentgaming.files.wordpress.com](http://www.residentgaming.files.wordpress.com)
- Figure 30 Jarinyanu David Downs  
*Kurtal as Miljitaru*, 1989  
Acrylic and ochre on canvas, 183 x 122 cm  
Source: [www.canningstockrouteproject.com/artists](http://www.canningstockrouteproject.com/artists)
- Figure 31 Michael Riley  
*Untitled*, from the series *cloud (feather)*, 110 x 155 cm  
Photograph, chromogenic pigment print  
Source: [www.visualarts.qld.gov.au](http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au)
- Figure 32 Rob Gutteridge  
*Cloud Painter*, 2011  
Oil on linen, 70 x 60 cm  
Source: [www.rimbundahan.org/art/artists/rob\\_gutteridge/cloud\\_painter.jpg](http://www.rimbundahan.org/art/artists/rob_gutteridge/cloud_painter.jpg)

- Figure 33 Svetlana Bailey  
*Road #1*, 2012  
C Type print, 120 x 120 cm  
Source: [www.artreal.com.au/home/svetlana-bailey](http://www.artreal.com.au/home/svetlana-bailey)
- Figure 34 Helene Weeding  
Digital photograph of fog on the Tamar Estuary, June 2013
- Figure 35 Helene Weeding  
Digital photograph of the Bridgewater Jerry, July 2012
- Figure 36 Tony Woodward  
*Jerry*, 2008  
Green Point Plaza, Bridgewater  
Mosaic, concrete, bronze, black granite, 295 x 150 x 100 cm  
Source: digital photograph by Alan Weeding, June 2013
- Figure 37 Rosemary Laing  
*Flight research #5*, 1999  
Type C photograph on paper, 107 x 240 cm  
Source: [www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/collection/contemporary\\_australian\\_art/rosemary\\_laing](http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/collection/contemporary_australian_art/rosemary_laing)
- Figure 38 James Turrell  
*Virga*, 1974  
Natural and fluorescent light, site-specific dimensions; room: 373.4 x 445 x 943 cm; skylight: 2 cuts, 447 x 30 cm (each), Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York  
Source: [www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections-online/artwork/4088](http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections-online/artwork/4088)
- Figure 39 Helene Weeding  
Digital photograph of virga, July 2015
- Figure 40 Helene Weeding  
Digital photograph of fog from Rocherlea Fingerpost, June 2013
- Figure 41 Kurt Hentschlager  
*ZEE*, June–July 2013  
Fog, stroboscopes, pulse lights and surround sound  
Mac 1 building, Macquarie Wharf, Hobart  
Source: [www.abc.net.au/radionational/program](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/program)
- Figure 42 John Morris  
*Mountain Lake*, 2013  
Oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm  
Source: [www.johnglover.com.au/exhibitions/2013](http://www.johnglover.com.au/exhibitions/2013)
- Figure 43 Atelier Chan Chan  
*Urban Fog*, May 2011  
Source: [www.openbuildings.com/buildings/urban-fog-profile-38974](http://www.openbuildings.com/buildings/urban-fog-profile-38974)
- Figure 44 Berndnaut Smilde  
*Nimbus Platform 57*, 2012  
The Hague, Netherlands  
Digital Type C Print, 72 x 112 cm  
Source: [www.flickrriver.com/photos/tags/berndnautsmilde](http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/tags/berndnautsmilde)

- Figure 45      Samantha Clark  
*Cloud Chamber*, 2007  
 Polyfibre filling, nylon thread, variable dimensions  
 Installation for Radiance 07, Q Gallery, Glasgow  
 Source: [www.samanthaclark.net/artworks/2007/26/cloud-chamber](http://www.samanthaclark.net/artworks/2007/26/cloud-chamber)
- Figure 46      Helene Weeding  
*Cloud Play*, April 2012  
 Oil, enamel paint, polycarbonate, MDF board, LED light, batteries, wire, switch  
 60 x 60 x 6 cm
- Figure 47      Jem Finer  
*The Centre of the Universe*, 2005–2007  
 Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, UK  
 Source: [www.artpointtrust.org.uk/projects/details.asp?projects\\_id=113](http://www.artpointtrust.org.uk/projects/details.asp?projects_id=113)
- Figure 48      Yeonkyu Park, Kwon Han, Hyeyeon Kwon and Hojeong Lim  
*The Mist Tree*, 2013  
 Source: [www.inhabitat.com/mist-tree-tower-uses-fog-to-provide-water-to-chiles-atacama-desert](http://www.inhabitat.com/mist-tree-tower-uses-fog-to-provide-water-to-chiles-atacama-desert)
- Figure 49      Lesley Duxbury  
*Where There's Smoke #24*, 2010  
 Inkjet print, 80 x 100 cm  
 Source: [www.wellington.vic.gov.au](http://www.wellington.vic.gov.au)
- Figure 50      Helene Weeding  
*Endless #1*, 2014  
 Océ UV flatbed print onto acrylic sheets and mirrored board,  
 180 x 120 cm
- Figure 51      Helene Weeding  
*Liminal Study* (series of 5), 2015  
 Ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board,  
 1200 x 1600 cm

## INTRODUCTION

This project began in 2011, when I flew in a light airplane from Launceston to Flinders Island in Tasmania. The whiteout I experienced flying through the thick cloud layer was chilling and made me feel slightly apprehensive, but once the plane emerged from within the turbid space, I was awestruck by the cloudscape that was revealed. There was something familiar about it, as though landforms below were echoed in the clouds above. I recalled the famous Romantic painting by Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818), in which a human figure is posed standing above, and observing, a fogbound landscape before him. This painting also has the capacity to cause me to reflect if the ‘wanderer’ had the same feelings of anxiety and slight trepidation that I felt while driving along the Midlands Highway, near Oatlands in Tasmania, in July 2014. The thick, dense band of fog that appeared before me looked beautiful, white, and pristine from a distance, but, as I drew nearer, my heart rate elevated slightly, my hands tightened on the steering wheel, and I began to lean forward, as if to duplicate in advance what my body would do unconsciously as I entered this turbid area.

My definition of turbidity refers to cloudiness or haziness of water caused by large numbers of generally invisible individual particles, similar to smoke in air, causing the water to lose its transparency and adopt a type of opacity. The particles cause light to be scattered and

interfere with visual range: the denser they are, the more limited the range. A turbid space, therefore, is exemplified by thick or dense cloud, fog and mist.

What did this experience of turbidity mean to me? Is it the union of my beliefs concerning what might happen when I entered this space, together with my experiences of entering turbidity on previous occasions? I want to adapt my approach to experience as encompassing the analytic as well as subjective; the conscious and unconscious; the felt and imagined. My method refers to a flexible topology, one that reflects a sensory, yet thoughtful, encounter of turbid spaces. It involves the investigation of a particular way of experiencing place, in and through, turbid space. In this respect, my project is topological. I could also argue it is affiliated with Gaston Bachelard's expression 'topoanalysis' as 'the systematic study of the sites of our intimate lives' (1969, p. 8); while Bachelard examines intimate spaces, I explore turbid ones, yet both analyses retain poetic qualities.

Topology is also a concept that underpins Martin Heidegger's thinking where it refers to the etymology of 'topos' as 'place' which, according to Jeff Malpas, includes the 'focus', 'horizon' and 'origin' of thinking (2012a, p. 17). Malpas further suggests that a return movement to primary thought in a place 'opens up room for what belongs in it' (2012a, p. 25) and that this relationship is equally unified as well as plural in character. Heidegger's thinking is essentially a capturing, while my experience of turbid space is more ephemeral. However, I concur that close

observation of place (turbid or not), and the role of boundary is flexible and procreative, rather than constrictive.

I am aware that use of the term 'experience' may signal a phenomenological methodology, but in this project I am not restricting myself to the course set by Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, a space that has been experienced is founded on the distinction between here and there, yet experience and thinking are interlinked. My experience of atmospheric, dense cloud incorporates the corporeal and concrete, as well as sound, movement, the insubstantial, endlessness, and other intangible qualities that are difficult to describe, but the experience may be shown through visual methods. In other words, I am concerned with the phenomenological character of turbid spaces and how this character can be revealed. In this I follow Malpas, who refers to 'the intelligible character that belongs to place' and which includes the inseparability of 'character of place and the character of our encounter with place' (2015, p. 1). He adds (with reference to Massimo Cacciari), that the difference between place and space is that place is linked comprehensively to boundary, while space relates to 'the openness within the boundary' (p. 3). For Malpas:

... to be within a place is to find oneself affected by that place ... in the fullest sense it is to be capable of acting within it and moving through it; it is to gain a feeling for patterns and rhythms of the place, of its own movements, of the density of the spaces within it, of the possibilities that it enables and the demands that it imposes (p. 79).

For me, turbidity represents possibilities, movement and the breakdown in the usual clarity between one realm and another – somewhere liminal and ambiguous (and not completely concrete), as it

can encompass the act of watching (as in Friedrich's painting) or being amid it, exemplified when I entered the fog band on the Midlands Highway. Sometimes it can be a combination of observing and encompassing, as was the case when I was in the light airplane flying to Flinders Island, even though I recognise that I was separated from tangibly feeling the clouds by the cocoon-like structure of the plane. For me, the suspension in the plane felt like a liminal state aptly described by Malpas:

The liminal is that which stands between, but in standing between it does not mark some point of rest. Instead, the liminal always carries a movement with it – a crossing, a movement towards or away from, a movement into or out of (2014, pp. 1–2).

I define my experience of turbidity as including analytic, subjective, conscious and unconscious responses, as well as movement and an awareness of the intrinsic quality in a moment of suspended movement, implicit in a liminal space.

This research demonstrates and experiments with new ways of visually representing or capturing the fluidity inherent in turbid atmospheric conditions. It emphasises movement, temporality and the liminal qualities of turbidity as intrinsic aspects of the experience of wet and thick atmospheric phenomena. It also questions the place of these ephemeral forms in both landscape writing and depiction, and examines their relationship to human experience; to the experience of both body and senses within a turbid space.

Although fog, cloud and mist are patently visible, is it possible to capture the ephemeral and nebulous qualities inherent in them through

traditional visual art methods – in particular painting? Since the inception of this project I have questioned why these atmospheric conditions are often regarded as a backdrop to the main action and historically were very rarely regarded as important phenomena in their own right. This attitude has since been reconsidered by artists mentioned later, such as Fujiko Nakaya, Antony Gormley, John Morris, Kurt Hentschlag and Atelier Chan Chan, who observe the constant change to the amorphous quality of dense cloud or fog. Claude Monet, John Constable, JMW Turner, Claude Monet, Philip Wolfhagen, Samantha Clark and Jem Finer investigate atmospheric conditions from the stance of spatial understanding, light, movement and engagement with the natural world. Michael Riley, Jarinyanu David Downs, Rob Gutteridge, Svetlana Bailey, Rosemary Laing and Lesley Duxbury, together with writers Rohan Wilson and Danielle Wood, explore atmospheric liminal spaces, and connections between nature and humans. Those artists who are interested in making atmosphere ‘atmospheric’ include Klas Eriksson, Olafur Eliasson, David Martin and Berndnaut Smilde, while architects Philippe Rahm and Peter Zumthor are concerned with incorporating the outside with the inside through airflow. How do I (with reference to these artists, writers and architects, among others) explore the experience of observing and entering turbidity?

Fog, mist and cloud can embody many meanings depending on the stance of the viewer, but in this project I aim to explore how I can represent the experience without actually representing reality. As such, my fog paintings often originate as abstract works and it is only through a process of layering that they achieve a resemblance of a landscape,



albeit one covered in fog, cloud or mist. The viewer only has to peer closely to see that what was first thought to be concrete landforms and vegetation are not what they seem. The paintings therefore have the potential to become imbued with experiential memory, allowing the viewers to decipher them according to their own experience and recall a memory that:

may be false in that it is not what it seems to be, perhaps it could even be a memory of someone else's experience, but the memory is nevertheless our own just in virtue of being present to us as something we recollect (Malpas 1999, p. 75).

The form of the exegesis follows an initial visual investigation, through painting and related media, of atmospheric conditions experienced in the upper reaches of the Tamar River in Launceston. Because the city is often fog-bound, it provides an ideal investigation site, with many opportunities to visually and photographically record this phenomenon. I have focused on island, coastal and estuary landscapes, experienced corporeally and visually, to decipher my intimate and personal responses to turbidity. In this project, turbidity is defined as a dense, thick or cloudy atmosphere, which can stimulate an uncertainty of perception or loss of solid reality. Initially the investigation involved a broad experimental approach; examining and working with various methods of paint application, digital photographs and video footage. The emphasis was on developing a visual language that reflected a personal and conceptual engagement with the Tamar Estuary, chosen for its changeable atmospheric qualities.

In Chapter 1, Light and Sight, the reliance of sight (or visibility) on light is discussed. Lucy Lippard's and Denis Cosgrove's views of landscape as

a negotiated place, which is inhabited or explored experientially, are also investigated in relation to the north-west Australian atmospheric phenomenon called the *Staircase to the Moon*. John Dewey's philosophical approach to the ordinary and extraordinary elements of landscape experience is evaluated and contrasted with Charles Waldheim's urban landscape framework comprised of visible and invisible layers. Claude Monet's struggle against seeing the external world as familiar is viewed in the light of Lucy Lippard's landscape interpretation that it is a subjective and negotiated experience. Comparison is made between writers Jay Appleton and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle regarding the use of turbid spaces as either a place for refuge or concealment. How turbid spaces envelop, shroud and are transitory on a lower, more immediate sensory level, symbolising various states of body and mind, are examined. Fujiko Nakaya's fog sculptures are considered, referencing ancient Japanese thought that fog was 'the breathing of the atmosphere', combined with Nakaya's belief that fog's 'ever-changing form is the probe, in real time, of its immediate environment' (Banks 2013).

Turbid spaces hold many meanings, but my depiction and understanding of them are approached in a different way from the historical Romantic position. Being in turbidity is explored in the contexts of porosity, permeability, and loss of place and consequent retrieval. Ethologist Konrad Lorenz described how human and animal behaviour rests on aspects of the idea to 'see without being seen' (Appleton 1996, p. 62). This is in direct contrast to being in turbid spaces where visibility is limited and 'seeing' is often impossible. A

discussion of James Corner's statement that seeing is important 'to condition and control' (1999, p. 155) follows and correlation is made with other writers such as David Leatherbarrow (1999), questioning the interface between visible/invisible elements and human relationship. Being able to see can also signify a method by which we can describe or control the environment that surrounds us. This mode of thought relies on the perception of defined objects and leads to an exploration of environmental aesthetics and eidetic content, including a comparison of form to edgelessness, and whether it is possible to capture the ephemeral nothingness of water.

My initial investigations of turbidity incorporated painting experiments on a variety of surfaces using a variety of paint types and methods. Digital photographs and video footage of cloud, mist and fog informed these experiments. By using a form of eidetic recall, the images were more randomly formed instead of slavishly reinvented from a pre-existing image. For the purpose of this project, eidetic memory refers not only to imagery, but also to sound and the corporeal experience of atmosphere. Through layering watercolour paint, dyes, inks, glue, water, oil paint, varnish and various other mediums, the experience of covering and uncovering/concealing and revealing is explored. Also, using the process of layering and concentrating on the fluidity of turbid atmospheric conditions, I intended to evoke visual permeability, reconfiguration, mutation and dissipation. By framing my paintings through taping the edges, I recalled Edward Casey's understanding of landscape, which includes the outer limits (Malpas 2011, p. 92).

Therefore, the paintings literally combine the salient and subtle edges that constitute, for Casey, liminology (p. 91).

In Chapter 2, Atmosphere or Atmospheric? I have located my research through a process of specific place investigations and incorporated a response to differing 'wet' conditions. The development of the project led to a specific visual approach to both turbidity and experience of the ephemeral characteristics of atmospheric space. Drawing on the science of meteorology, I searched for a 'narrative order among events governed not by laws alone, but by the shapeless caprices of the atmosphere' (Hamblyn 2001, p. 12). The work of architect Philippe Rahm is discussed, including his contemporary building designs, which rest on the volatility of air combined with an 'inner emptiness ... not usually seen with the naked eye', but are dependent on human presence (Stec 2013). Danish installation artist Olafur Eliasson has likewise based much of his practice on recreating aspects of both the landscape and atmospheric conditions, focusing on the more ephemeral qualities of air, temperature and smell. Eliasson has been able to harness elusiveness and reposition some of these qualities within a carefully constructed environment.

Experiencing Turbidity (Chapter 3) examines George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's view that metaphors help us understand different experiences in relation to each other, rather than in isolation. Contrast is made to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's belief that to interpret perception it is necessary to be distant from distracting objects, so that the focus is on perception itself. My experience of peering into thick turbidity is

recalled in my *Turbidity Study* series of paintings, where I gradually created a distance from the viewer of perceivable landscape forms through a process of layering. This layering effect can also be seen in the film *Apocalypse now: redux* (2001) and in novels by Tasmanian writers Rohan Wilson and Danielle Wood, in which fog and mist act as signifiers of human vulnerability, both physical and mental. The work of landscape writer Anne Whiston Spirn is examined in relation to how dense cloud can affect, and provoke, responses that are described in terms of metaphor and language, as a method of experiencing landscape. The phenomenon of the Bridgewater Jerry, a radiation fog which travels rapidly down the Derwent River from Bridgewater to Hobart, is discussed and compared to liminal spaces exemplified by anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner and artists who demonstrate an awareness of liminality, including Rosemary Laing and James Turrell.

Being Lost (Chapter 4) explores methods of encountering a turbid space, where seeing occurs as if through a dark, shadowy veil. Experiences such as participating in Kurt Hentschlager's man-made fog/light/soundscape, *ZEE*, are discussed and compared to naturally occurring phenomena of fog and mist, as well as the powerful effect both can have on humans. Often turbidity occurs naturally in layers or bands, and I discuss how Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophical method of providing form to matter can also relate to the less solid, and more ephemeral, atmospheric phenomena. Finally, I look at my approach to capturing turbidity (and the experience of it), as well as the efforts of other artists and designers.

The experience of being amid a turbid space can cause a disturbance of vision. Light becomes scattered as a result of the thickened atmosphere and objects that are close appear magnified in proportion to those that can barely be discerned in the distance. The body becomes cloaked or shrouded in turbid matter, causing anxiety that is sometimes only alleviated by distance. The importance of light to a corporeal sight is discussed in the opening chapter.

# Chapter 1

## Light and Sight

Light and sight are partners in visibility. In darkness and on the peripheries of vision, seeing is not reliant on light and is often experienced corporeally – by feeling through the immediate environment. Objects that are close are explored tangibly in detail, but things in the distance can simply disappear as if they didn't exist, unless they are accompanied by a shift in atmospheric sensation. This chapter will explore John Dewey's view concerning the ordinary and the extraordinary (Gilmore 2002, p. 273), and how the reduction in light, due to turbid conditions, can make the surroundings potentially dangerous or unstable. Dewey's view is compared to Lucy Lippard's and Denis Cosgrove's views of the landscape as a subjective experience. An artist who paints his intimate, 'lived-in' landscape (Lippard 1997, p. 7) is Claude Monet, an exemplar of a painter of light, and his series of haystacks paintings is contrasted to series of turbidity studies that I produced during this project. These paintings highlight the reliance of visibility on light and sight in turbid space, and reference is made to philosophers, artists, architects and filmmakers who focus on the use of different light conditions, followed by how a lack of light and visual acuity, can cause something to become invisible:

Without light all is lost. If we cannot see an object we cannot name it, and it is invisible to our senses – it becomes a mystery and at best a shadow-form devoid of meaning (Beech 2012, p. x).

While I do not agree with Martin Beech's assertion that when something is invisible it becomes devoid of meaning, he goes on to state that for us to understand what qualities make up invisibility, we must look to the heavens, as well as earth-based laboratories where alien life may dwell (2012, p. 29). Writer Danielle Wood regards light and darkness as blinding factors; both have the capacity to make us lose our way (2003, p. 311). In comparison, John Dewey's pragmatic approach suggests there is an important position for the 'ideal, intangible and transcendent' (Kestenbaum 2002, p. 1), but as Kestenbaum suggests, he was unable to incorporate these qualities into everyday life:

Ordinary experience may be transcended, but it is still, in his view, the 'ground' of the intense moments of aesthetic experience because *they are its possibilities*. The 'ground', I think, presents more of a challenge for Dewey ... (p. 6).

For Dewey, the extraordinary becomes the ordinary, and subsequently the ordinary can produce something that is extraordinary. He states that the world is inherently unstable and is a 'scene of risk', and that what is risky in nature is primarily invisible. 'The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is seen decides what happens in the seen' (Gilmore 2002, p. 273). While this seems to be a circular type of argument, the extraordinary is exemplified by Dewey through Romantic poetry, recalling Turner's painting, *Snow Storm – Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842), which is further discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 46 - 47). This is in direct contrast to the view of urban landscape advocate, Charles Waldheim. Waldheim regards the landscape as not simply an aesthetic object, to be admired or feared, or a type of leftover space, but rather



as an important framework consisting of visible and invisible layers, not one held within another. While these two stances veer from subjective to objective, Lucy Lippard's support of Denis Cosgrove's definition of landscape as 'the external world mediated through human subjective experience' (Lippard 1997, p. 8) is a position more relevant to my, and others, contemporary landscape interpretations. Lippard further suggests:

A lived-in landscape becomes a place, which implies intimacy; a once-lived-in landscape can be a place, if explored, or remain a landscape, if simply observed ... Unlike place ... landscapes can only be seen from outside, as a backdrop for the experience of viewing. The scene is the seen (pp. 7-8).

Claude Monet's Impressionist paintings precede the view adopted by Lippard that spatial understanding of landscape can summon familiarity (or the opposite). Monet's paintings appear abstract when the viewer is close to them, but viewed at a distance they take on a more realistic aspect. My turbidity paintings begin with abstract shapes and after completion assume more representational characteristics. They also have in common what Virginia Spate refers to as:

The eye, struggling with its habitual desire to focus on objects, is pulled into the space beyond those objects, where it becomes aware of 'the same light spreading everywhere (p. 205).

Monet spent most of his years painting while struggling against seeing the external world as a familiar place, and counter-intuitively he painted the same subject over and over again, in differing light, becoming an exemplar of the painting of light. He was obsessed with capturing a moment in time and 'every variation of light on a motif', and this resulted in his working on multiple canvases simultaneously, sometimes

only painting one or two brushstrokes before the light altered (Spate 1992, p. 10). In her book, *The Colour of Time: Claude Monet*, Spate describes Monet's paintings as challenging 'a complex discourse which constructed spectators as consumers of art. He used a technique which simultaneously distanced the spectator and invited intimacy' (1992, p. 42).

Despite an avowed visual structure and objective technique, from the 1860s onwards Monet's compositions contained an increasingly subtle use of colour, tonal and linear relationships relating to landscape motifs. Spate further suggests that Monet was inevitably unable to remain completely detached and 'it is possible that ... Monet did invest nature with his own emotions ...' (p. 157). In his series of paintings of haystacks and poplar trees, light is materialised and made visible. Additionally, there is a palpable vibration of light, which emanates from the familiar, natural, and man-made aspects of the landscape where Monet lived. Delicate brushstrokes reflect the artist's intimate involvement, while their abstract qualities resemble a type of expressive artistic shorthand which has the tendency to immerse the viewer, especially when seen from close range. Susan Stewart discusses this immersive quality, its creation of a speculative detachment, and its relationship to abstraction later in this chapter in reference to Antony Gormley's installation, *Blind Light* (p. 26).



Figure 1: Claude Monet, *Poplars along the River Epte, Autumn*, 1891

In 1865, Monet began painting his haystack series, in which he:

... employed an almost identical, drastically simplified composition to register the passage of light. With the four pictures of poplars emerging from the early morning mists, these stacks of wheat mark the introduction into the domestic landscape of a systematic study of changes of light on a more or less unvarying motif (Spate 1992, p. 198).

*Haystacks at Chailly, sunrise* (Figure 2) was the first painting in the series and it reveals a distinct tension between the object and the background, while the predominant haystack almost glows with an unearthly, heightened, coloured light.



Figure 2: Claude Monet, *Haystacks at Chailly, sunrise*, 1865

The ensuing series of paintings resulted in the haystacks achieving a dense, monumental presence, which has the effect of focusing attention on the spreading light that surrounds them, and forces the viewer's gaze into negative spaces; spaces rarely addressed by artists of Monet's period. By simplifying the composition of this series, Monet was able to focus attention on light and its ephemeral characteristics, depicting the changing atmospheric conditions while visually measuring the passage of sunlight throughout a day in relation to the stacks of hay.



Figures 3 and 4: Helene Weeding, *Turbidity Study*, 2013

In 2012, during preliminary research for this project, I painted twenty *Cloud Study* works depicting cloud formations, and since February 2013 my focus has been on a *Turbidity Study* series (Figures 3 and 4). These paintings relate to my version of eidetic recall, which incorporates sound as well as emotional attachment. In this, I differ from Monet's truthful observation of light nuances, as my paintings include a spontaneous response to fluid mediums, in an attempt to portray porous, edgeless and permeable turbidity. They occur as an outburst of

activity, uncontrolled initially until, after several layers, they are somewhat contained. Looking closely at the *Turbidity Study* paintings, 'The story of light builds upon the small and the large, the local and the distant' (Beech 2012, p. 29). Forms are uncovered that resemble topographies: mountain peaks, undulating hills, forests, islands and the sea. They are intended to recall the experience of standing on the banks of the Tamar Estuary, peering through fog, trying to see what objects actually are in the distance, similar to the placement of the figure in Friedrich's *Wanderer*. Through the process of layering and covering, I expose landscape elements akin to archaeological artifacts, reflecting a hidden world. Light and air are closely linked and, in its most turbid form, air can become so thick it takes on another characteristic altogether.

Temperature, humidity and dust can change the quality of air and, combined with reflective water and flat surfaces, particular optical effects such as mirages, rainbows and haloes can occur. Between March and October every year, a beautiful optical illusion called *Staircase to the Moon* is visible along the coastline of Western Australia and can be viewed at Onslow, Dampier, Cossack, Point Samson Peninsula, Hearson Cove, Port Headland and Broome. The illusion is caused by light from the rising moon reflecting on to wet mudflats at low tide. The effect is one of a staircase reaching up to the moon (Figure 5).

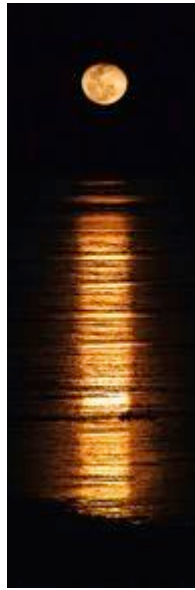


Figure 5: Tourism  
Western Australia,  
*Staircase to the Moon*,  
2013

In August 2013, I visited Broome to experience this spectacle, which creates a breathtaking golden 'staircase' three nights a month. It was almost impossible to photograph the phenomenon, as it changes continually and can only be seen fully at certain places. A campsite right on the beach at Roebuck Bay provided a perfect viewing platform. The reflection appeared as a slim column of light and is reliant on an extremely bright, full moon. It is something that has to be personally experienced before the full effect can be realised, as it appears suddenly, surprising in its beauty and distinct presence. Despite its essential characteristic of illusion, it was reminiscent:

... of the fact that sometimes what we see is not necessarily real ... and, while electronic images may not be true representations of our surroundings, we should also remember that nature can play tricks of light upon us, producing through atmospheric channeling non-existent impossible vistas, that for all their apparent reality we may never hope to physically explore (Beech 2012, p. 73).

This is also another reminder of the importance of movement in the experience of this stunning phenomenon. Nothing noteworthy appeared to happen as the sun set and then suddenly the moon appeared, and the staircase step reflections gradually developed to full glory before subsiding into a dark night.

Anne Whiston Spirn points out in *The Language of Landscape* that air itself is not regarded by us as real, yet when dust is added it becomes more material and less ephemeral (1998, p. 97). Alexander Galloway refers to dust and fog as having 'certain obfuscatory qualities. They strangle the light and interfere with one's ability to see. But at the same time they have their own form of luminosity' (2012, p. 162). He further states that atmospheric phenomena can be regarded as 'dioptric', an optical term that is based on how light is refracted through 'transparent materials such as glass or water' (p. 163). Therefore, turbid air, which contains water, refracts light as it enters fog/cloud/mist and refracts it again as it departs. Galloway's declaration that this type of refraction is both 'subjective' and 'experientially deep' (p. 165), affirms my viewing of the *Staircase to the Moon*, as spectacle and as a deeply moving experience.

Another atmospheric illusion that relies on light rays being bent due to warmer air close to the ground, with cooler air above, is a mirage. A mirage can produce clear, shimmering images in the distance of large lakes or areas of water. In Australia, with expanses of flat land, hot temperatures and light winds, these optical spectacles occur often (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Michael Dahlem, *Mirage west of Burren Junction*, September 2011

Light can be bent or transformed in many ways, and some atmospheric effects occur in a quieter, much less obvious manner than mirages. In fact, they can be so subtle that they are barely discernible. Martin Heidegger referred to light as 'lumen' or 'the light of life ... the light of this world experienced through passage and illumination' (Galloway 2012, p. 161), and further explained that a phenomenon such as fog 'transforms a space of absolute co-ordinates into a proximal zone governed by thresholds of intelligibility' and is therefore experiential (p.162). I was interested in this position because although fog is visible and present it does not appear to be filled with light, yet according to Heidegger it is still a transmitter. Therefore, it seems turbidity can carry light from one place to another, and as such is a vessel of illumination, yet it can also be a dense, thick and impenetrable barrier.

All the atmospheric phenomena discussed rely on light in one form or another to ensure they are visible. The act of seeing and wanting to touch, or capture, an ephemeral fluid phenomena such as turbidity is



exemplified by writers such as Danielle Wood:

Leaving, returning, there is always a crossing; a stretch of time and distance between shores. Perhaps I am even invisible ... she remembers thinking on the day that she left Tasmania behind ... and felt herself become as featureless as the pale grey water all around (2003, p. 91).

Wood uses atmospheric phenomena to effectively mirror or exemplify emotion, despite their place historically as 'appendages' or backdrops to the main human action (Bermingham 1994, p. 88). While WJT Mitchell refers to the landscape as 'a medium not only for expressing value but also for expressing meaning' (1994, p. 15), he speaks from a position that is focused on earth/land, one in which the sky, complete with clouds, mist and other forms of weather, can be regarded as a backdrop. Mitchell's water is contained by pools, rivers and lakes as conduits for reflecting nature. The background (including sky, fog, cloud and mist) is ignored, as if atmosphere is invisible. Perhaps, because atmospheric phenomena lack earthly solidity and cannot be held or grasped firmly, historically they were not regarded as important and visible aspects of landscape.

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, being able to see is the essence of the visible (Baldwin 2004, p. 249). Merleau-Ponty further states that touch and sight are inextricably linked as we see initially, and then we transform the visible into a tangible object through touch. The 'hands on' approach makes sense of what is seen and thus the object is known more fully. What then occurs when vision is impaired by turbidity and the attempt to touch atmospheric phenomena is hampered? Flying in a light airplane to Flinders Island through a thick layer of cloud in 2011, I

experienced a type of whiteout. Nothing was visible out of the window and, although the interior temperature was controlled, it felt cold. I also felt apprehensive, like Yi-Fu Tuan in his book *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*:

Suddenly, my perspective shifted. I realized, with distressing acuteness, that only a plate of glass separated me from instant death. The beauty of nature is something I can admire only from the safety of a humanly constructed world (1974, p. xiii).

Not being able to 'see' through the turbidity, and knowing I could not touch it, was part of my anxious response to being amid the clouds in spite of Jean-François Lyotard's suggestion that to 'have a feeling for landscape you have to lose your feeling of place' (1998, p. 187). I doubt that he was referring to literally being suspended within such an unfamiliar and strange place as thick cloud. Despite a lack of clear vision from within turbidity, we are still able to see around us, albeit for only small distances. Milan Kundera asserts that in fog we can still ascertain certain features which are close by and we are not as defenseless as we are when situated in places of complete darkness (1995, p. 238).

Experimenting with Lyotard's idea of losing a feeling of place and being visually suspended was the impetus behind my placement of large works leading into, and away from, a corner. This ensured that the viewer would be forced to use not only central but also peripheral vision to see the entire installation, not unlike the effect emanating from many of Monet's paintings (p.14). My desire was to engage the spectator in an inactive and essentially static representation of turbidity, which would ultimately immerse the visual sense and evoke slight movement

(albeit through retinal tracking), to simulate the experience of being amid a turbid space. I did not intend to ‘manufacture’ fogs, done by artists such as Antony Gormley, Fujiko Nakaya and Michaela Gleave, which, even though they are subtle, are expected and directly corporeal, rather than solely sight-based. Therefore, these large ‘Liminal Landscapes’ (Figure 7) rely on the audience to experience separation, emulating the distance between the viewer and the cloudscape, as seen from an airplane window.



Figure 7: Helene Weeding, *Liminal Landscape #4*, 2015

To be surrounded by dense fog can be potentially frightening, as experienced by visitors to Diller, Scofidio and Renfro's *Blur Building* (Figure 8). In 2002, the architectural trio constructed a steel-framed building on the Yverdon-les-Bains Lake in Switzerland. The building housed ‘thousands of small nozzles that projected droplets of purified water into the air’ and as a consequence the building and immediate surroundings became a ‘blur’. This caused no small degree of unease to visitors as, clothed in raincoats, they had to access the building via narrow bridges where they were enshrouded by an artificial turbid

atmosphere. Visibility was progressively limited, and people seemed to appear and then disappear. It seems that many people who interacted with this installation lost a sense of confidence in the solidity of the building itself: 'All was absorbed into light and mist' (Vidler 2007).



Figure 8: Diller, Scofidio and Renfro, *Blur Building*, World Expo, Switzerland, 2002

In 2007, British sculptor Antony Gormley, drew on the Diller, Scofidio and Renfro experience and located it within the parameters of a controlled space in The Hayward Gallery (Figure 9). People entered the 10-metre glass cube and, to the outside viewer, bodies seemed to appear and then disappear, similar to *Blur Building*, within the viscous atmosphere of the:

captured cloud ... Gormley's installation ... is experienced as a positive and enriching state – one that liberates the body from its normal conditions of responding to verticality, horizontality and clear boundaries (Vidler 2007).

According to Antony Vidler, visitors entering *Blind Light* apparently felt a moment of losing their orientation due to a lack of vision, and he

further described the sensation as a type of 'suspension' between some place and no place (2007), a liminal experience.



Figure 9: Antony Gormley, *Blind Light*, The Hayward Gallery, London, 2007

Gormley's work is situated within the idea that the body is a lived-in place and *Blind Light* is therefore indexical; the trace of a real body is left in a real space, which is not visible to the observer. Susan Stewart has suggested that:

Abstraction is an inevitable aspect of perception – not only in peripheral and nocturnal vision, for example, but also to the extent that it is an outcome of any view of a certain proximity or distance (2007).

The sensation of abstraction or lack of vision is not something that most people would enjoy, as the ability to see (and see clearly) is how 'we make sense of the world' (Beech 2012, p. ix). Ethologist Konrad Lorenz once described how much human and animal behavior rests on the ability 'to see without being seen' (Appleton 1996, p. 62). This is in direct contrast to being amid turbid spaces, where visibility is limited

and 'seeing' is often impossible. If trees are objects and the space between them a prospect, Jay Appleton extends the hypothesis when he asks: where then does atmospheric phenomena reside? Appleton regards fog, mist and smoke hazes as 'nebulous' refuges and refers to them as provoking 'a powerful aesthetic response' when viewed from a distance, as a veil or blanket over a vista, but to be in fog he describes as 'the bleakest of sensations' (1996, p. 93).

Thick atmosphere can be a hazard as well as a refuge, depending on the position of the observer. It can conceal a potential threat, which is vividly described by writers such as Herman Melville. In *Moby Dick*, Melville announces the sudden appearance of the whale 'shrouded in a thin drooping veil of mist' (2003, p. 627). Leo Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina* evokes the hidden danger, 'the ice on the river began to crack ... and the turbid, frothing torrents flowed ...' (1954, p. 169). In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the 'hellish' hound bursts out of the fog:

The cloud was within fifty yards of where we lay, and we glared at it, all three, uncertain what horror was about to break from the heart of it ... A hound it was, an enormous coal-black hound ... Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish be conceived than that dark form and savage face which broke upon us out of the wall of fog (1902, pp. 251-252).

These literary references use fog/mist as an instrument for the concealment and ultimate revelation of a potentially terrifying experience. While we would possibly be amazed and stunned if something or someone disappeared before our eyes, we are much more threatened by the suggestion of a sudden and shocking appearance from

a place we cannot see into. Turbid places can conceal such a threat.

Two artists who do not utilise man-made fog/mist to frighten, or even disorientate, are Michaela Gleave and Fujiko Nakaya. In 2007, Gleave produced artificial clouds in her work *Cloud Field (Föhn Bank)*. The clouds she generated responded to human physicality and allowed the participants to manipulate and play with them. There did not appear to be an implicit threat in the experience.



Figure 10: Michaela Gleave, *Cloud Field (Föhn Bank)*, 2007

Fujiko Nakaya employs fog to include not only a personal experience, but also a larger interaction with the environment. Nakaya exhibited one of her fog sculptures in the Sydney Biennale in 2012. *Living Chasm* was sited on Cockatoo Island. The fog seeped from a narrow crevice between a rock face and the wall of the main building, gradually drifting towards the visitors, enveloping them gently. Children responded by running in and out of the fog, shrieking with laughter, some hiding from

their parents. There was no sense of danger: the atmosphere was peaceful and the enjoyment was palpable. In August 2014 at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, I experienced another Nakaya fog sculpture in the Sculpture Garden. Here, I did not want to remain in the turbid space but felt compelled to keep moving and try to see the temporal sculpture from a distance so that I could admire it. I was slightly uncomfortable at the thought of remaining in the thick fog and I observed that the actions of those around me were similar to mine.



Figure 11: Fujiko Nakaya, *Living Chasm*, Cockatoo Island, Sydney, 2012

Whiston Spirn responds to, and reveals, several complex characteristics of atmospheric conditions. Her statement that: 'In an unfamiliar place, senses sharpen, a survival instinct: in familiar territory, senses dull, and it takes an effort to refresh them ...' (1998, p. 4) questions the situation of atmospheric phenomena. Are they uniquely part of a landscape or, as they are shared, are they familiar? For something to be familiar, does it have to be solid? We can see atmospheric vaporous phenomena and no



one can deny the presence of these hovering over the land, sometimes encompassing landforms completely. The difference is that these turbid elements that are an intrinsic part of our environment constantly change shape and value and are never static, and perhaps that is why we respond the way we do. They can also be predictors of changes in the weather: small and white, or leaden, dark and threatening. They can be so high they appear fixed in one spot, or so low they race across the surface of the sky. If familiarity depends on what Martin Beech refers to as 'taking dominion over the world by giving names to those objects that don't change their form from one moment to the next' (2012, p. ix) then how can clouds be named? For Gavin Pretor-Pinney, naming cloud types, or classifying them, is important and makes some of them 'familiar and *tangible*' (2009, p. 21). This tangibility relies on vision, as we are physically unable to grasp them.

Being able to see can also signify a method by which we can describe or control the environment that surrounds us. This eidetic mode of thought relies on the perception of defined objects. But what happens when the objects are amorphous, fluid and undefined? David Leatherbarrow wrote about ephemeral substances, saying: 'Edgeless matter was ... vital and procreative – a fertile fluidity from which all visible things arose', (1999, pp. 173-174). Trying to capture the edgelessness of matter continues to be the impetus in my painting experiments. In earlier works I concentrated on cloudscapes that were informed by photographs taken from the airplane flight to Flinders Island in 2011 and flying in another light airplane to Ireland in 2012. These

experiences have influenced not only my depiction of turbidity, but also framing the paintings reflecting the action of looking through a window, was similar to that of being in a plane. It was difficult to capture edgeless and ephemeral cloud and fog through painting, with its inevitable reliance on borders and outside edges, without utilising a physical frame, but these experiments provided the impetus to explore other framing options (p. 52). While some of the artists I refer to have taken a stance of immersion in turbidity, ultimately they engage with the idea of capturing thick cloud, many resulting in photographic documentation. I am also documenting, but from a distance, albeit a distance intimate and felt.

My paintings began with looking up to high cloud, or being at cloud level, and later developed into a fascination with ground-hugging turbidity, such as thick fog or mist. I responded to the ambiguity present in the representation of a clothed or shrouded landscape with suggestions of land/water forms. Paintings were developed through layering and differing degrees of control of fluid mediums (Figure 12). By allowing the inks and watercolours to merge with the wet background, the process of a dynamic, vaporous atmosphere was replicated, and observable.

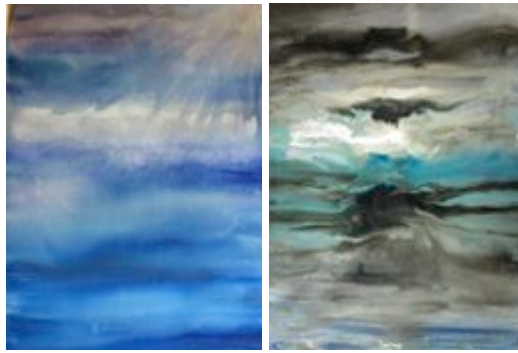


Figure 12: Helene Weeding, examples of the layering process for experiments with fog/mist, February/March 2013.

The layering revealed possible, familiar, landscapes but at the same time hid potential ones (seen in Figure 13), an action recognised in Joseph Parry's evaluation of Jeff Malpas's position:

It is this dynamism in art – its power to become, its power to transcend its own objectivity when resituated, its ability, in other words to harness the power of freedom to open us to the openness of possibility – that makes art matter (Parry 2011, p. 5).

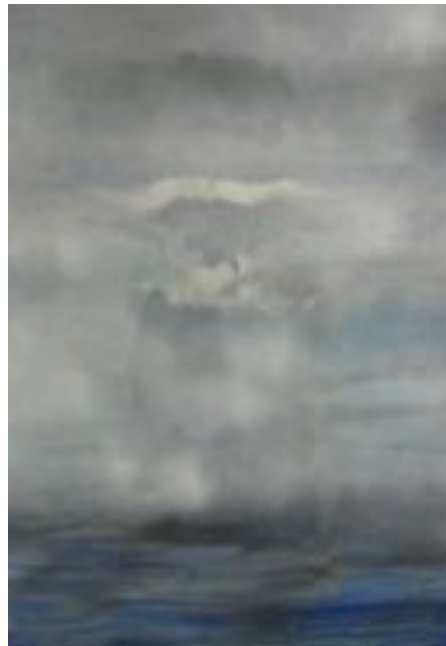


Figure 13: Helene Weeding, completed painting February/March 2013

At my exhibition *Cloud Play* in 2012 (Figure 14), Malpas spoke about my lightbox paintings as dissolving:

... some of the standard elements that appear in many cloudscapes. These are not cloudscapes that stand in relation to a conventional landscape, and even the clouds themselves often seem to constitute themselves as a dense and swirling mass rather than anything more determinate. Only in a few of these works is there a sense of a horizon. For the most part these are cloudscapes – or sometimes mistscapes – that are painted almost from within the cloud, within the mist itself (Malpas 2012).



Figure 14: Helene Weeding, *Cloud Play #16*, 2012

In *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies*, Edward S Casey refers to the edges of landscape as perhaps the beginning of a new understanding of what landscape is composed of, or constitutes, including its outer limits, or liminology (Casey in Malpas 2011, p. 91). Within this perception, Casey defines two distinctly different edges: the ‘Salient Edge’ and the ‘Subtle Edge’ (p. 92); the Salient Edge being defined and obvious, the Subtle Edge more ambiguous. An example of a Subtle Edge is a completely clear, cloudless blue sky, where it is hard to discern where something ends and another begins, but I wonder where he places a ‘blanket’ of fog or mist, covering the landscape? Perhaps they belong in the middle of these two edges and as such become ‘a

commixture of ... indeterminate phenomena' (p. 93). For Casey, the edges of landscape he refers to are exactly that: *land*. While he also includes seascapes, *turbidscapes* or cloudscapes do not seem to be acknowledged at all. Malpas, on the other hand, allows for the presence of ephemeral atmospheric forms in his perceived landscape.

To sum up, Lippard, Cosgrove (p. 12) and Galloway (p. 18) regard the landscape as a subjective experience, a stance that is relevant to my depictions of turbidity. While thick cloud such as fog is a transmitter of light, it can also form a dense barrier, yet cannot be grasped or contained. To be surrounded by fog can cause disorientation, a type of suspended or liminal experience, resulting in a form of abstraction. This abstraction relates to the intangible qualities of vapour, and the difficulties inherent in uniting inside air with that outside. Architects Philippe Rahm and Peter Zumthor have embraced the:

... paradigm shift in cultural production from beautiful objects in space (art) or the containers for them (architecture) towards the design of climatic, aromatic, acoustic, vaporous, tactile, and haptic atmospheres ... (Adams 2012).

This holistic approach is further explored in Chapter 2 and is integral to the type of contemporary architectural designs that are being hailed as innovative, and indicative of a trend towards a healthier and more responsible method of living in harmony with our environment.

## Chapter 2

### Atmosphere or Atmospheric?

This chapter explores how architects and artists have responded to atmospheric phenomena to incorporate the outside and the inside in an effort to harness the elusiveness of air. This is followed by my experiments with differing media, trying to capture the same elusive essence of vaporous turbidity, with reference to artists John Constable, JMW Turner, Philip Wolfhagen and David Martin.

In October 2012, Swiss architect Philippe Rahm presented a lecture titled 'Meteorological architecture' as part of the Bartlett International Lecture Series. A synopsis of this lecture states that:

The problem of global warming has made the relationship between climate and architecture a central preoccupation. In order to assume our responsibility in the face of these new ecological concerns, we must make the most of the moment in order to reappraise the field of architecture in a broader way, extending it to other dimensions, other perceptions, from the physiological to the atmospheric, from the sensorial to the meteorological, from the gastronomic to the climatic (Rahm 2012).

Rahm posits that climate could be the new language for architecture, and that atmospheric phenomena such as heat, light or vaporous conditions should be the foundations for contemporary design of structures.



Figure 15: Philippe Rahm, *Convective Apartments*, Hamburg, Germany, 2010

In many of Rahm's buildings, air and its flow are pivotal and often predicate the design. *Convective Apartments* was built in 2010 for the International Building Exhibition (IBA) in Hamburg (Figure 15). By implementing the natural law of warm air rising and cool air falling, Rahm has harnessed temperatures that are then regulated in every room. The living area is cooler than the bathroom, for example, and this specificity of temperature 'could economise a lot of energy by reducing the temperature to our exact needs' (Rahm 2013). Different depths and heights of spaces accord with the varying temperatures and consequently predict the exterior appearance of the building. Airflow and shape are so important that even the plant-life surrounding the building is chosen with care to ensure only clean fresh air enters.

Another Swiss architect, Peter Zumthor, also adopts an holistic approach in his architectural designs. In 2013, the Los Angeles County

Museum of Art (LACMA) was re-opened, revealing Zumthor's transformation of the museum into an energy-efficient, contemporary glass structure. It is so efficient that it produces energy excess to its own requirements. The project, titled *The Presence of the Past: Peter Zumthor Reconsiders LACMA*, reportedly cost US\$650 million and resulted in an 'experience-based village' (Rosenfield 2013).



Figure 16: Peter Zumthor, *LACMA*, Los Angeles, California, 2013

For Zumthor, creating an atmosphere that evokes sensory qualities such as touch, sound and smell are an integral aspect of designing for a specific site. The atmosphere he aims to create includes the atmospheric, silence, light and a quiet presence, which Zumthor believes encourages well-being, meditation and harmony. His buildings leave space for emotions (Dyckhoff 2013).

While Rahm and Zumthor are interested in making use of the flow of air to design buildings that create a particular atmosphere, an artist who has recently made atmosphere 'atmospheric' is Klas Eriksson. In a collaborative performance for the Copenhagen Art Festival in August 2012, Eriksson 'interrupted Copenhagen's city life by changing



the color of the immediate atmosphere to a bright orangish-red' (Davis 2012).



Figure 17: Klas Eriksson, *Mono Colored Atmosphere*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2012

Several smoke bombs were ignited simultaneously and tossed into the canal in front of Christiansborg, which resulted in a thick, cloudy and brightly coloured atmosphere that enveloped the audience. Eriksson stated in an interview with Jacquelyn Davis that before he began the performance it had to be supported and approved by the police and other government departments, as the smoke that was emitted could have caused havoc to drivers and cyclists near the event. Although Eriksson said that the visual experience could 'be seen as hostile and beautiful simultaneously' (Birnbaum 2002), it seemed from watching a video of it that most of the viewers were entranced and mesmerised by the unusual and unexpected atmospheric event unfolding before them (Malmstrom 2012).

Danish installation artist, sculptor and photographer Olafur Eliasson has based much of his art practice on recreating aspects of both the landscape and atmospheric conditions of his native country. For example, by focusing on the more ephemeral qualities, such as air, temperature and smell, Eliasson has been able to harness elusiveness and reposition some of these qualities within a carefully reconstructed environment.



Figure 18: Olafur Eliasson, *Your natural denudation inverted*, Pennsylvania, 1999

In *Your natural denudation inverted*, a type of geyser is seen erupting from 'a very obvious construction' (Birnbaum 2002, p. 10). To achieve this, Eliasson redirected the heating system from inside the Carnegie Museum of Art. The effect outside the museum was noisy, loud and forceful, whereas inside all the sound disappeared and distanced the viewer from the aggressiveness of the outdoor experience. Instead, by looking at it through a window, it re-formed the installation, framed it, and presented it to the viewer as more of a photograph or painting

than an actual event. This experience is similar to my flight in a light airplane to Flinders Island. Cocooned by the vacuum-sealed atmosphere inside the plane, I found the natural atmosphere unreal and distant, framed as it was by the aircraft's double-glazed porthole window. The window and, in Eliasson's case, the Carnegie building tended to tame the outdoor experience of violent air, dampening perceptions of the unfamiliar occurrence.

Reflecting on the work at my exhibition at Sawtooth ARI Gallery in Launceston in May/June 2013, I realised the genesis of enclosing my *Turbidity Study* paintings in a white frame originated from the experience of looking at a cloudscape from within a plane, the vista framed by the plane's window. Perhaps subconsciously I was also trying to modify and 'tame' turbidity in the sky. This attempt to harness an elusive experience has informed much of my art practice during the life of this project.

I have undertaken many experiments with the thought of mental snapshots or film sequences remembered from previous experiences. Initially, I worked with inks, oil paint and various media on sheets of Mylar, trying to see whether the flow of materials could simulate the movement of racing cloud formations I experienced in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2012 (Figure 19). While I achieved some interesting results, ultimately the Mylar was too rigid and unresponsive, and the paints sat on the surface. With this in mind I then sourced some paper of varying weights and began again. By wetting the paper thoroughly and

then applying both acrylic ink and watercolour, I allowed the media to mix at will, which produced some fascinating shapes and colours.

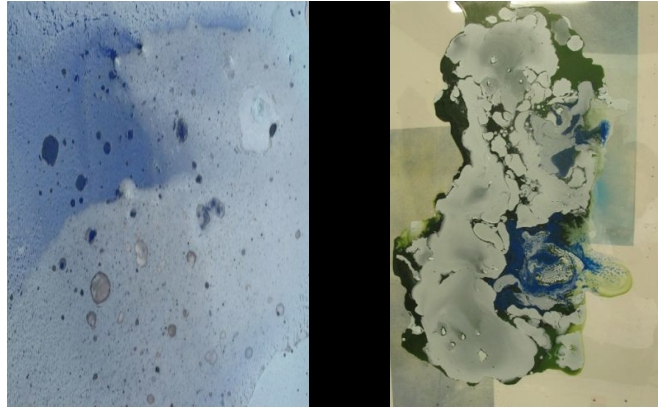


Figure 19: Helene Weeding, fluidity experiments, February 2013

By spraying water, sponging, scraping and mopping this layer while wet, I exposed some areas of the layer underneath while simultaneously covering others. I began to create a depth and interest I had not foreseen. The final layer consisted of sprayed monochromatic enamel paint over the image to imitate the experience of dense turbidity. Suddenly, the abstraction of the second layer transformed into land/seascapes and I felt I had found my niche (Figure 20).



Figure 20: Helene Weeding, Turbidity studies showing second and third layers, April 2013

I then experimented with smaller sheets of paper, placing them side-by-side, similar to screen shots from a video (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Helene Weeding, experiments with small paper, January 2014

While some of the experiments with smaller sheets of paper had pleasing results, when I tried to duplicate them with larger pieces of paper they lost the sensitivity and freshness that emanated from the small works, leading me to abandon this approach.

One series of cloud study experiments did capture my interest, making me more aware of the weather and its many formations and patterns. I made small cloud studies every day in the postgraduate studio, looking upwards and outwards to see glimpses of the sky through the square panes of glass high above me (Figure 22). The resultant small works continually informed me of the weather outside and I have become fascinated with the patterns made by the isometric pressure bands, which I drew freehand over the top of each cloud study. The square format reflects the square windowpanes and, despite the small size of the works, they tell a story of my days in the studio space pursuing this project (Figure 23).



Figure 22: Helene Weeding, digital photograph of windows in postgraduate studio, 2014

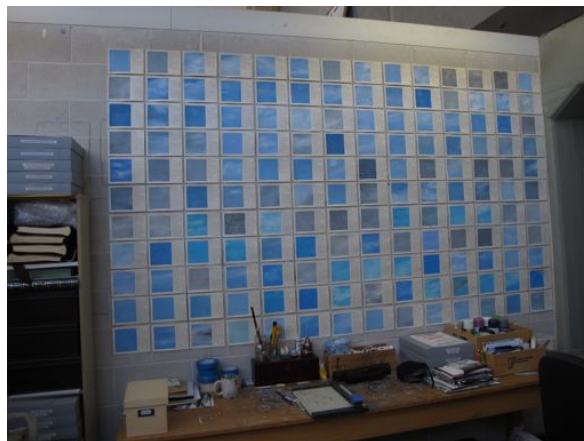


Figure 23: Helene Weeding, Cloud study series, September–March 2015

Documenting the sky and its associated cloud formations and weather patterns has also been the work of photographer David Martin. His *Sunpicture* series (Figure 24) presents the unremitting glare of the sun that demonstrates:

a visual heat that shimmers and burns. Swirling, tempestuous clouds moodily circle a darkening sun, while directly opposite, the searing light of a flawless sky beams out in a white-hot glow (Downes 2005).

The intense atmosphere created by Martin in this series hints at the supernatural or celestial bodies, with the luminous sun gently caressed and framed, much like Eliasson's framing from inside the museum, by fluffy cumulus clouds. This has a similar effect, as the sun appears to be softened, therefore 'letting the viewer cheat blindness to gaze upon its fiery body' (Downes 2005).

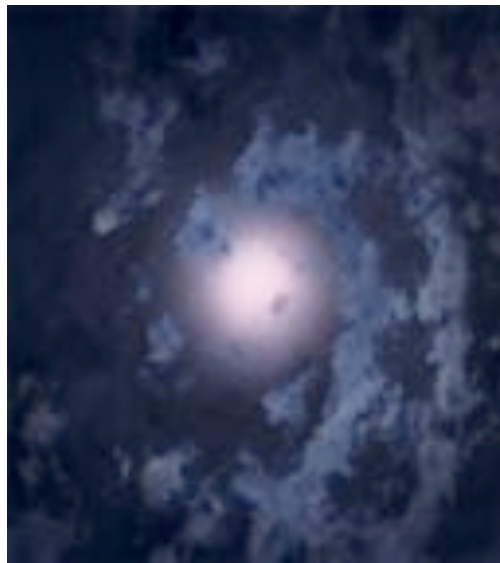


Figure 24: David Martin, *Sunpicture*, 2001–2004

Philip Wolfhagen, who has had a longstanding interaction with the Tasmanian landscape and its atmosphere, has often interspersed his stylistically consistent landscape exhibitions with motif-like cloudscape exhibitions. These seem to act as a relief or rest from 'the historical and ideological weight' (Hansen 2000) of the Western or European approach to landscape depiction, which informed some of his early (c. 1988) paintings.



Figure 25: Philip Wolfhagen, *Third Exaltation*, 2011

The painting *Third Exaltation* (Figure 25) is an example of a minimal landscape dwarfed by the sky. It demonstrates an intimate understanding of the atmospheric qualities of clouds and recalls John Constable's cloud study paintings. Figure 26 shows a painting by John Constable, the self-named 'man of clouds' (Hamblyn 2001, p. 222). Constable adopted clouds as his particular motif and some of his cloud paintings were possibly more of a true reflection of 'Constable Country' than his well-known Romantic landscapes. In the summer months of 1821 and 1822, Constable produced more than 100 cloud paintings, which Richard Hamblyn describes as 'the most admired of all his productions' (p. 223).





Figure 26: John Constable, *Cloud Study*, 1821

During the time I have been painting cloud studies in the studio, I have discovered that I am more attracted to wilder weather than gentle conditions. While I agree with Hamblyn (2001) that Constable's cloud paintings are among his most successful, I have always been more drawn to the terrifying meteorological depictions exemplified by Romantic painter JMW Turner. Turner was an artist who represented, according to James Hall, 'the unmediated experience of nature' (2010), notably in the painting *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842), which perfectly demonstrates the movement implicit in such adverse weather conditions. He was determined to personally experience, and subsequently depict, the power of the merciless sea and weather pitted against men and ships. One story is that Turner had himself strapped to the mast of this boat during a storm so he could feel the force of nature more vividly. Regardless of whether this is fact or fiction, the painting exemplifies the enduring elements of nature

compared to the tentative existence of man, often glorified by other Romantic artists. This ambient approach to the experience of and engagement with nature encompasses and challenges the historical dichotomies between subject and object. By being immersed figuratively in *Snow Storm*, the distance between man and the natural world is reduced; we become a participant in the drama unfolding rather than an observer.



Figure 27: JMW Turner, *Snow Storm – Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, 1842

The role of observer accords with David Seamon's views on the phenomenology of landscape, which he regards as a separate entity. He offers a concrete phenomenology that involves learning to look at the landscape elements and then understanding how they interrelate (1993, p. 166). Christian Norberg-Schulz also states that despite changing phenomena there is a constant structure that concrete phenomenology can disclose and interpret. While both Norberg-Schulz and Seamon are admirable in their efforts to pin down what it is that constitutes landscape, they barely touch atmospheric space as an intrinsic part of

our lived environment. Despite Norberg-Schulz's inclusion of 'cosmic' in his four types of landscape, he exemplifies it as the desert where 'eternal order hardly disturbed by time' exists (Nogué I Font 1993, p. 165).

Likewise, the closest Seamon comes to a general inclusion of the sky or weather is to suggest that an understanding of how different elements/phenomena work can represent a 'specific sense of place' (p. 166). This sense of place can be experienced through our own particular connection to the landscape and it is through this connection 'that imagination itself arises, on which it draws, and to which it also gives shape and form' (Malpas 2011, p. xi). The type of atmosphere I am most interested in is one which forms a thick, dense cloud and allows me to experience, and form, imaginary landscape elements while I am enveloped in it: in other words, turbidity.

Finally, the essence of turbidity lies in its elusive, ephemeral and sensory qualities, which have motivated Rahm, Zumthor and Eriksson. Eliasson has furthered this experience by exaggerating certain aspects, including air, temperature and smell, in order to tame an experience of violent air. Painting experiments with visually taming/capturing atmospheric turbidity recognise my ongoing interest in and engagement with naturally occurring atmospheric forms in the landscape, as well as my relationship with them, as experience.

## Chapter 3

### Experiencing Turbidity

To demonstrate relationships between ideas of landscape and experiences of turbidity, in this chapter I initially review contemporary artists who demonstrate an awareness of the processes of perception, as well as the potential that exists for creative thought in turbid spaces, for myself, as well as for others. My experiences of entering different turbid spaces, together with my responses to the liminal and suspended world exemplified by Rosemary Laing, follow.

The term 'meteorology' was conceived as reference to, or boundary of anything that came from, or was positioned in, the sky (May 2003, p. 16). Once again, the sky seems to be a backdrop for a more important event (the weather and atmospheric phenomena), even if the event is also often ignored or overlooked. In my artwork I have tried to capture traces of the experience of being amid turbidity, as well as standing outside it and observing from a distance. I, too, set up certain boundaries by taping the edges of the paper, framing my view to imbue the paintings with an awareness of the process of perception, while simultaneously giving more importance to thick cloud. The clouds act as a visual barrier to what is perceived to be behind them and thus control the viewer's perception. As a consequence they are the focus of the visual experience.

Experiencing turbidity often begins as an optical experience. Two years ago, I was a pillion passenger on a motorbike when we spotted a sheet, or blanket, of low-lying stratus cloud in the distance. On entering this turbid space, we immediately felt cold and wet. This feeling was completely at odds with my description of the fog from afar as a blanket or a sheet, metaphors that tend to evoke images of comfort and cosy, warm beds. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, suggest that perceptions that arise as a result of metaphorical descriptions relate to 'natural kinds of experience' (1980, p. 118). These natural types of experience are emotional, spatial and perceptual and are often regarded as a repository for containment, due to a human desire to tame or control wild spaces. This desire also encompasses phenomena such as fog or clouds, which have no distinct boundaries. Hence we often refer to fog as a 'fogbank' or clouds as a 'blanket'. We perceive these metaphors related to phenomena as having both an inside and outside and as discrete entities in their own right. Is the sky an entity also? Do we see it as having boundaries such as the horizon and our own particular field of vision, even if we know that it is infinite and cannot be contained?

In my final works I have been conscious of making the construction as transparent as possible by resisting the urge to frame traditionally (thereby covering up the edges) and using the edges to connect to other works in a group. I am aware that I cannot eliminate a border/edge entirely. Even an installation such as *Urban Fog*, by Atelier Chan Chan, is essentially confined and bounded by the building itself (pp. 74–75). In 2014, after a month-long residency in the painting department at the

Australian National University, I decided to work mainly with acrylic sheet and composite board. While there, I worked out how to translate my paintings, which originate as works on paper, onto acrylic sheets using a huge flatbed printer, but I also wanted to continue with the layering process. Once I had worked out how to accomplish this to achieve the depth of surface I was striving for, as well as stability and strength, it became a challenge to fuse the final layered works as if there were no distinct framed boundaries, which would have confined the image too much.

I spent quite a long time trying to work out how to meld two such disparate mediums as plastic and wood together seamlessly, so that they did not appear to have a frame, instead 'floating' on the wall. After months of experiments, I worked out a method that allows the layers in the works to interact and meld with each other. Even though there is a border (the edge), there is not the rigid separation that a physical frame would have made. The absence of an obvious frame emphasised the endlessness and edgelessness of turbid space.

I have since been able to apply this 'non-framing' method to large pieces of work with equal success. The smaller works reflect looking upwards, sometimes even further than the eye can see, while the larger pieces continue to depict the ground-hugging stratus turbidity I had been concentrating on since late 2013. Both sets of work rely on the layering method I have developed during this project.

Olafur Eliasson has focused his practice on controlling the more ephemeral qualities of weather ‘which initially seem redolent of the spiritual and emotional sensibilities of Romanticism’ (May 2003, p. 17), and has taken a different approach to framing his installations. Eliasson makes us aware of the mechanics involved in his installation sculptures by not hiding special pumps, scaffolding or other structures that support them. Rather, they are obvious, and the observer is therefore ‘conscious of the act of perception, of being caught in the moment of awareness...’ (p. 18).



Figure 28: Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, Tate Modern, 2003

Seeing ourselves in the act of seeing is reminiscent of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s view that to understand perception it is necessary for us to distance ourselves from objects and instead focus on perception itself. Susan May refers to this as the ‘object of consciousness’ (2003, p. 18). I experienced this feeling of being conscious of the act of seeing when I stood on the banks of the Tamar Estuary in Launceston, Tasmania, desperately trying to discern objects that were eluding me. I did not seem able to separate myself from the objects I was trying to see, as recommended by Merleau-Ponty, and

instead I kept peering and visually attempting to unveil the scene before me with my eyes. I remember thinking that I needed to sharpen my eyesight to make things real, to delineate a scene, while being aware that this was impossible.

For Eliasson, reality may not necessarily be real but is thus perceived due to the unique position and expectation of the observer. In the installation, *The Weather Project* (Figure 28), in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, he has tapped into the hall's original use as the Bankside Power Station and its contribution to 'peasouper' air pollution in the 1950s. In *The Weather Project*, sun and sky are dominant features but Eliasson also introduced a fine fog/mist, which gives the impression that the hall is partly exposed or even open to the outside air. The misty atmosphere seemed to soften the harsh industrial interior and duplicated the feeling of being inside and outside simultaneously. During the day the mist gathered and reformed as a type of cloud before it dispersed and disappeared:

A glance overhead to see where the cloud might escape jolts the gaze. The ceiling of the hall has disappeared, replaced by a reflection of the mist and clouds below ... The mirrored ceiling draws the eye to the far end of the hall, where a giant semi-circular form hangs, illuminated by hundreds of mono-frequency lights. The arc is repeated in the mirror overhead, producing a perfect sphere of dazzling radiance (May 2003, p. 26).

In the Turbine Hall, Eliasson replicated the rhythms of weather with clouds forming and dissipating over and over again, giving the observer an illusion of reality, despite its obvious construction. The dazzling sphere gave the impression of a radiant sun and its enormity was emphasised by the comparative size of the human observers, dwarfed



by the suspended circular form. Despite a distancing of the viewer from the atmosphere generated by Eliasson, the installation can be regarded, according to Saara Liinamaa, as a metaphor for a potential disaster:

*The Weather Project* intimates what is a limit point of environmental interactions: the sun as disaster, the disaster as sun. That is, the root of the sun in the word disaster ... This inflection of disaster is 'an unpropitious or baleful aspect of a planet or star; malevolent influence of a heavenly body; hence, an ill portent.' By recalling this relatively obscure etymological origin of disaster, it is possible to read Eliasson's project as a metaphor for the disaster, specific and yet unspecified, in culture and the environment. This exhibit enacts the weight of the disaster-not-yet: what happens when the disaster does not happen? (2004, p. 75).

In Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse now: redux* (2000) (the longer version of the classic original 1979 film), images and the feeling of looming disaster, visually similar to what was experienced in Eliasson's *The Weather Project*, abound (Figure 29).



Figure 29: Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse now: redux*, 2000

Fog and mist and the movement of them are also used to signify confusion, alienation and fear of the unknown. As the film progresses and the actors travel up the river, darkness descends and fog billows around the boat or on the shore. At times, disembodied sounds or voices are heard, adding to the confusion. The scene of an arrow attack takes place in thick fog, while the bridge scene is cloaked in darkness. Both the

fog and the darkness seem to indicate the removal of the crew from the comfort of civilisation. The fog also concurrently hides, and then exposes the action, as quickly as the scenes change. The other interesting effect is the inclusion of a misty interior when the environment outside is clear. This recalls Eliasson's misty interior in the Turbine Hall and the eerie atmosphere created by the outside gaining entry to the inside.

Fog, mist and cloud are also used to set the tone of scenes in novels by authors Rohan Wilson and Danielle Wood. In Wilson's *The Roving Party* (2011), the Tasmanian colonial landscape is depicted as a grim and ruthless environment, an apt backdrop to the actions of John Batman and his roving party, who set out to round up and kill as many Indigenous people as they can find. While Wilson writes about cloud cover dissipating to reveal 'a ponderous moon' (2011, p. 218), he also refers to the humanising aspect of 'fragile cloud ... stretched across the sky's ribcage' (p. 184). On the other hand, in *The Alphabet of Light and Dark*, as Danielle Wood's main character sits on the deck of the *Kittywitch* at Bellerive Quay, the monochromatic sky becomes a source of consolation:

...she felt as if she could pull the soft, pearly greyness of the early morning around herself, make a small cocoon of comfort for as long as everything – the dense, diamond-pleated expanse of cloud, the colourless undulations of the water – would hold still (2003, pp. 21–22).

This recalls the Romantic tradition when there was a desire to return to intrinsic components of the landscape as vehicles for the expression of emotion. Emphasis was on an intense emotive experience, regarded as a genuine source of aesthetic understanding. This holistic vision

established a greater weight on the viewer, who responded by entering willingly into the creative world of the arts. Historically, it has also been a vital part of religious doctrines to consider the sky, or heavens, as a space that is shared by gods of many denominations and cultures.

Australian Indigenous artist Jarinyanu David Downs paid homage to the great storm Kurtal by depicting it as a human being holding up the heavy rainstorm that descends on the desert region at the onset of the wet season (Figure 30). For the Walmajarri people of the Western Australian Kimberley area, water is a living thing. They believe that when they die their spirit returns to reside at the waterhole, which is sacred. Kurtal is 'manifest as a cloud bank, and holds the sky above his head with his fingers' (Baker 2004).



Figure 30: Jarinyanu David Downs, *Kurtal as Miljitaru*, 1989

In 2000 Michael Riley exhibited *cloud* at the Australian Centre for Photography. One of his untitled works shows a feather suspended in the sky (Figure 31). Riley reflected on the apparent weight of the feather

by saying, 'the feather ... could also be quite a heavy thing. I see the feather, myself, as sort of a messenger, sending messages onto people and community and places' (Riley 2000). Both Riley and Downs have narrowed the gap between nature and humans. In both works there resides an 'imaginative, often unexpected, comparison between basically dissimilar things' (Whiston Spirn 1998, p. 226). Riley's feather also recalls Rosemary Laing's *Flight research #5* (Figure 37), as both depict an apparently heavier-than-air object/person floating weightlessly in the sky.



Figure 31: Michael Riley, *Untitled*, 2000

The relevance of sky/space as the 'widest setting of our lives' is questioned by Ronald Hepburn (2010, p. 274). Hepburn's examination of interplay in the relationship between imagination, emotion and thinking led to the development of a branch of thought called environmental aesthetics. This idea was informed by a love of nature and aesthetic experiences developed from walking in the countryside, where Hepburn was drawn to admire, contemplate and respect nature. He argues that a lack of belief in a traditional 'sky-god' (p. 274) has led to a type of disenchantment which has been exacerbated by human intervention via space travel. For Hepburn, the feeling that sky and

outer space are now almost tangible as a result of this intervention has led him to declare:

Here, I think is one prime context in which art-works and our past experience of them can modify, sensitise ordinary-life perception; so that we come to see Constable Clouds, van Ruysdael clouds, surrealist strange lenticular cumulus clouds, and so much more, in the natural world itself (p. 276).

This view is echoed in the works of South Australian painter Rob Gutteridge. His interest lies in depicting anthropomorphic cloud paintings; in particular, looking at connections between cloud shapes and the human body. Gutteridge's motivation is situated within the idea that both cloud and body can exist simultaneously in nature, being neither one thing nor another: a type of hybrid. His paintings reflect the variety of cloud formations, evocative of 'different potentials' (Gordon 2006), but Gutteridge has essentially made concrete, or captured, a temporal atmospheric phenomenon that moves.



Figure 32: Rob Gutteridge, *Cloud Painter*, 2011

I have travelled great distances to look for similarities and differences in atmospheric phenomena. I have tried to grasp the essential visual characteristics of these phenomena, as well as their effect on my body.

When enveloped in fog I recalled Svetlana Bailey, who stated:

In fog, the effect of the context is partly removed ... Fog creates separation. When no longer bound to their surroundings, the context gone, things appear as they are. But they too can seem less ordinary, isolated within the landscape in which they normally exist (Artereal 2012).

Bailey also explores the phenomenon of low-lying cloud and fog as a means of demonstrating how temporal and insubstantial our surroundings can be:

The landscape, covered in fog, is revealed as a place for introspection and a time for aloneness. In fog, objects become obscured and the horizon is blanketed or hidden, which stimulates ideas of boundlessness and the uncertainty of perception (Bailey 2012).

In *Road #1* the blanketing and cocoon-like barrier around the landscape is inspirational, yet simultaneously promotes in me feelings of hidden threat. Bailey has photographed differing qualities of fog, looking for common links in different countries.



Figure 33: Svetlana Bailey, *Road #1*, 2012

Since the inception of this project, I, too, have found myself 'fog chasing' in the early hours of the morning on the banks of the Tamar Estuary. I have tried to capture fog using both photography and eidetic recall. While I am enveloped in turbidity, my perception becomes altered and I have developed an awareness of the very act of seeing, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, while trying to recognise objects in the distance, shrouded by fog. Are they real? If I entered this turbid space further, would they vanish? Am I too timid to enter further, or for longer periods of time? What is it that prevents me from staying there or even entering?

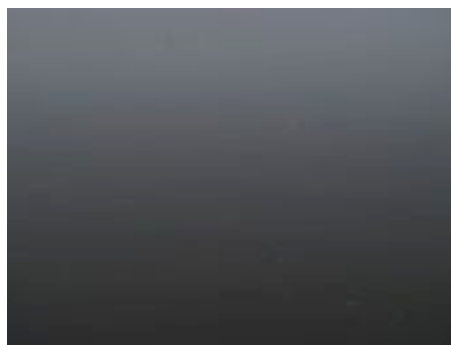


Figure 34: Helene Weeding, digital photograph of fog on the Tamar Estuary, June 2013

An enduring memory is of travelling from Pipers River to work in Launceston early in the morning, leaving behind a beautiful, clear sunny day, only to reach the top of the hill at Rocherlea and looking down to discover a sea of fog covering the city. It was often with a sense of foreboding, and reluctance, that I entered that turbid space. It is not surprising that I described the fog covering Launceston as a 'sea' and that I had to stop myself also from referring to it as a 'blanket' or a 'shroud'. Anne Whiston Spirn says:

Landscapes were the first human texts ... Clouds, wind and sun were clues to weather ... To read and write landscape is to

learn and teach: to know the world ... to express ideas and to influence others. Landscape, as language, makes thought tangible and imagination possible (1998, p.15).

Therefore, is it natural to describe the landscape often in terms of metaphors? Whiston Spirn believes it is, and states that 'the most basic metaphors of verbal language – stem from experience of landscape, like bodily movement through landscape' (p. 15). If I adopt Whiston Spirn's approach, then the 'language of landscape' is the 'house of being' as we live within it, in comparison to philosopher Martin Heidegger, who referred to language itself as the home of existence (p. 16).

We may share the landscape with other living things, but for humans, landscape holds inherent meanings. We are able to reflect on past events and phenomenon and these guide us, and place future events in relevant context. Lakoff and Johnson write about landscape experience and human understanding; seeing one in relation to the other. According to them, the body becomes part of the landscape physically, through inhabitation, as well as mentally, via the use of humanising metaphors (1980, pp. 47–49). Is this therefore the method by which we can truly enter the landscape or, more specifically, turbidity? I do not agree that to experience and become part of the landscape is restricted to the use of metaphors. What happens to the relationship between a felt experience and the liminal quality inherent in a turbid space? Likewise, what role does movement have in this?

Sometimes entering a space is not an act of knowing but rather acknowledgement in retrospect. On an early morning return trip from Hobart to Launceston, I passed through the small town of Bridgewater



(north of Hobart) only to discover, at Pontville, that I had driven through the Bridgewater Jerry without realising. It was only on reflection and looking backwards at the phenomenon that I recognised it for what it was. The Bridgewater Jerry (Figure 35) is a radiation fog that forms in the Derwent Valley and then proceeds along the course of the Derwent River, often enshrouding the northern and western suburbs of Hobart.



Figure 35: Helene Weeding, digital photograph of the Bridgewater Jerry, July 2012

The name Jerry is likely to have originated from English cockney slang for 'fog' or 'mist' (James 2006). It is common in winter as it results from cold overnight temperatures. Recently I experienced it as it rolled over the Bridgewater landscape in waves, similar to the waves of the sea breaking on shore, but slower and gentler. An apt description of the ephemeral Jerry appeared in *The Mercury* newspaper in 1946:

Down the River Derwent swept a draught that kept the thermometer near freezing point. The wind carried the sting of a whip lash; fog enshrouded the city in the early morning and continued to sweep down the river during the day like a plume of smoke from a giant's chimney ('Vigilant' 1946).

Tony Woodward uses a humanising metaphor to capture the Bridgewater Jerry phenomenon through the medium of sculpture

(Figure 36). The sculpture 'depicts a large human figure embracing a miniature town' (James 2006) and is comprised of various media, including mosaic, concrete, bronze and black granite. 'Jerry' holds the town of Bridgewater in his arms, creating a sense of community togetherness. This is one of the few instances I have found that depicts fog literally, in a concrete and human form.



Figure 36: Tony Woodward, *Jerry*, 2008

*Jerry* was shaped by Woodward as a cloud and paradoxically, despite the gentle quality of this vaporous entity, it is made of inflexible materials including concrete and mosaic tiles. My experience of the actual *Jerry* is somewhat different from Woodward's and exists more in a grey or ambiguous space, similar to the 'transition', or liminal, stage identified by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and later expanded upon by Victor Turner.

Van Gennep regarded the transition stage as one where the 'usual customs and conventions do not apply' (Davidheiser 2006); where there is a relaxation of social mores as has been found in catastrophic

situations such as the aftermath of an earthquake. Turner further expanded on this liminal state by suggesting a person becomes incorporeal or invisible: neither one thing nor another. Is this an essential quality of fog, mist or cloud? If I agree with Deleuze and Guattari, and the concept of liminality is a quality of space that is in-between others, then turbid phenomena are intermediaries between air and water:

There is a single *abstract machine* that is enveloped by the stratum and constitutes its unity ... a stratum necessarily goes from layer to layer, and from the very beginning, at the same time as the periphery reacts back from a new center in relation to a new periphery. Flows constantly radiate outward, then turn back' (1987, p. 56).

A liminal and suspended world is beautifully portrayed in Rosemary Laing's *Flight research #5* (Figure 37). She:

... proposes a paradox: the trajectory of an extraordinary movement is captured in a photographic 'still' (Laing 2001).



Figure 37: Rosemary Laing, *Flight research #5*, 1999

Laing's flying bride suggests a suspension of time and the figure is caught between fantasy and reality: movement and stillness. She is in flight, but with no apparent place to land; caught in the liminal space between sky and earth, almost hovering above the horizon. The bride, clothed in a fluffy white dress, could also be regarded as a

personification of an actual cloud, similar to one seen in the distance of the photograph.

Used in the sense of the Latin derivation of 'limen', or 'threshold', liminal can refer to an ambiguous or disorienting environment that means being somewhere and simultaneously nowhere. An example of this is the nautical mythical tale of the *Flying Dutchman*, a ghost ship that was manned by ghosts 'doomed to sail the seven seas for all eternity, never being able to make a safe anchorage' (Beech 2012, p. 73). This particular legend reflects being in a virtual liminal environment and at the same time the ship is constantly surrounded by fog: a portent of doom and ambiguity. The story originated in the 1600s, when a Dutch ship was made to sail through a storm that resulted in the crew being washed overboard. The captain was subsequently cursed and his punishment was to sail for all eternity. A contemporary version of the *Flying Dutchman* can be seen in the film series, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. This ghost ship is always shrouded in turbidity (Gibson 1994, 2004) and the members of the crew exist in a type of twilight, or liminal, atmosphere, never seeing clear sky or experiencing the darkness of night.

In contrast, James Turrell looks at 'human experience ... in a vacuum, with no atmosphere to diffuse light or transmit sound ... spaces where one is forced to attend to the limits of perception' (Varnedoe 2006, p. 116). Turrell is interested in perception and psychology and during the late 1970s he often used projected light in his works to create an illusion of a solid object (Figure 38).



Figure 38: James Turrell, *Virga*, 1974

Turrell explores light, space and time, and in *Virga* he challenged the idea of what is perceived as real. By combining artificial and natural light sources through slits cut into the ceiling and also a skylight, Turrell demonstrated a different approach to a depiction of atmospheric phenomena by 'eliminating the art object entirely, the artist instead uses light as his medium' (Ganter 1974). Turrell is an amateur pilot and has been influenced by the atmospheric conditions he has experienced while flying. Lindsay Ganter observes:

... (he) sometimes titles his works after meteorological phenomena witnessed in flight. While his pieces do not replicate the appearance of these airborne visual encounters, they allow viewers to access that elevated perspective and the accompanying perceptual experience. In nature, a *virga* is a wisp of precipitation that evaporates before reaching the earth (Ganter 1974).



Figure 39: Helene Weeding, digital photograph of virga  
July 2015

These light works by Turrell describe visually the idea of being somewhere but nowhere simultaneously, in a liminal or suspended space. *Virga* shows clearly how difficult it is to physically grasp turbidity and also emphasises the importance of perception, light and sight in any encounter with atmospheric phenomena (Figure 39).

To conclude, if sight is hampered the experience of being amid turbidity has the potential to be dangerous. My initial response to being amid thick cloud is generally nervous, cautious apprehension. How do I overcome these feelings so that I am able to enter such a place? My experiences and depictions of turbidity include being amid the phenomenon as well as observing it from a distance. Fog and mist movement implies both hidden threat and potential exposure, demonstrating how temporal and insubstantial the landscape experience can be. It is when we are enveloped by thick cloud that we lose a sense of distance perspective and this can give way to a feeling similar to being lost. This is explored further in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

### Being Lost

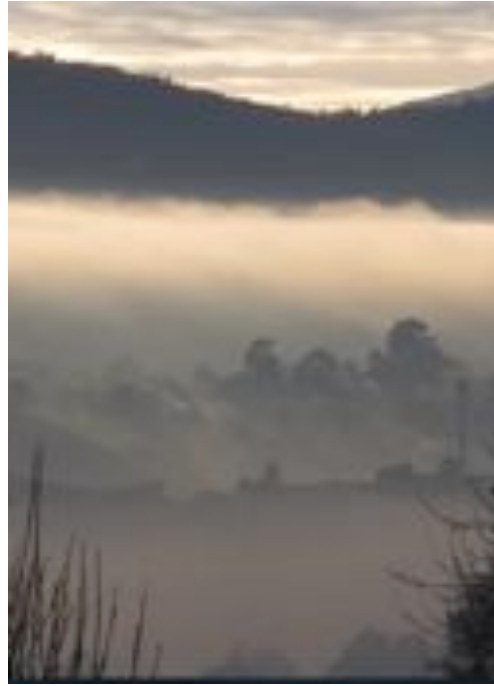


Figure 40: Helene Weeding, digital photograph of fog, June 2013

Martin Beech aptly describes the experience of losing orientation when light is lost due to a turbid atmosphere:

Without light all is lost. If we cannot see an object we cannot name it, and it is invisible to our senses – it becomes a mystery and at best a shadow-form devoid of meaning (Beech 2012, p. x).

In this chapter I will examine how contemporary installation artists and I grapple with the problem of encountering a space where seeing occurs with difficulty, through the shadows. What it felt like to be lost involuntarily amid turbidity is contrasted to my voluntary involvement in Kurt Hentschlager's fog and sound installation *ZEE*. How fog is formed in strata, or layers, is compared to its fundamental characteristic of light

dispersion, resulting in disorientation and confusion. The chapter also addresses how distance away from the turbid space is often a solution to gain perspective in the context of the surrounding landscape.

Paralympian rower Dominic Monypenny has told a story about being lost in fog: 'Ah the foggy days; even with all the years of experience that ... (the coach) had on The River (Tamar) – that particular pea soup ... saw us plough into the bank near Grammar' (Monypenny 2013). Being lost in fog has also been part of my experience in Launceston as a young girl. Enveloped in thick fog my sense of direction and confidence in my ability to navigate my way home was displaced.

The fog was not something I had entered willingly, but in July 2013 I travelled to Hobart to experience what had been touted as the standout exhibit of the 'Dark Mofo' festival: *ZEE*, which was created by Austrian artist Kurt Hentschlagner (Figure 41). Before entering the installation visitors were asked to sign a waiver, which only heightened the slight apprehension I was feeling. The experience of *ZEE* seemed to bypass my usual sensory pathways and immediately I was immersed in fog, so thick that nothing was discernible. The only other person with me was a staff member, and she disappeared into the turbidity when she was only half a metre away. Gradually the fog lifted slightly and I was able to make out some shadows, which subsequently developed into an amazing light show, incorporating stroboscopes, pulse lights and surround sound. It was a truly immersive experience and the colours changed from fuzzy pale greens and purples to intense blues, oranges, reds and yellows. At the same time, sound rose and swelled until I felt I



was in the middle of a jet turbine engine. The shapes and colours I could discern were sharply defined and almost hallucinogenic in their swirling sudden appearance and disappearance. Just as I felt I couldn't possibly keep my eyes open for a second longer (also, I realised I was clutching the guide rope tightly in both hands), the sound receded and the shapes and colours dimmed to a pale ochre mass. It was over and I could finally move.



Figure 41: Kurt Hentschlager, *ZEE*, 2013

The show was literally immersive, yet, when questioned by ABC reporter Suzanne Donisthorpe, Hentschlager emphatically stated that it was not meant to be an out-of-body experience: 'I am still in my body ... but we have metaphors ingrained in us ... we have to make sense and reference' (Cathcart 2013). Hentschlager also acknowledged that although some people are more anxious than others, we all share a sense of curiosity, which was what he was trying to arouse. I found that my perception was halted, as everything seemed muffled by the fog, and my spatial awareness and orientation was definitely disturbed. I was unsure where the boundaries were, where things began and ended. This feeling was even more disturbing as I experienced *ZEE* on my own, with

only the guide rope to hold on to when I felt insecure. At one point I nearly panicked and felt extremely aware of my mortality.

The world when covered in fog or mist is dampened and subdued. Sounds become muffled and it is difficult to orientate and find familiar landmarks. It is not unusual for fog to be linked to death, the landscape often described as 'enshrouded', 'smothered' and 'engulfed', and in written pieces such as *Blindingly Foggy*, a short story by Simon Whaley, fog becomes the enemy in a near silent battle:

My shouts failed to travel any distance, the molecules of moisture suspended in the air seemed to mop them up. The fog was getting worse. I could feel it getting thicker. The air around me was practically motionless. How I hated fog. Usually when the weather deteriorates, it becomes a battle. A fight against hurricane force winds trying to push you out onto the road and flat on your face. Or a vague attempt at remaining dry when rain drops are stabbing at your clothes. Worst of all, is the fear that sweeps across you in the wake of a thunderstorm when the hairs on the back of your neck dance about like iron filings near a magnet. Mist can be quite enjoyable. September and October are the best months, the beginning of Autumn. You can sense Mother Nature beginning to take stock of what needs to be done over the winter period. Mist gives her the cover she needs to float around and examine her workload. With it, she breathes freshness wherever she goes. But fog? That's entirely different. Fog is a mental battle, not a physical one. If I want to walk forward by ten paces I can. And I can do it just as easily as if it wasn't foggy. No wind will blow me over, no thunderbolt from high above. Fog makes everyone equal, for it is difficult to see, or be seen (2011).

John Morris is an artist who has depicted encroaching fog in Tasmania. In his artist's statement about his painting *Mountain Lake* (Figure 42), Morris described how he saw the lakes on route to Derwent Bridge late one afternoon during winter, when there was snow on the ground:

Other than the flowering wattle, greys dominated the landscape. It was cold, austere and beautiful. With mist and evening approaching, I remember watching in silence as the world gradually disappeared (Morris 2013).



Figure 42: John Morris, *Mountain Lake*, 2013

If Konrad Lorenz is correct, then the disappearance or loss of place and its subsequent retrieval are important in the daily activities of higher functioning animals. Consequently, seeing and hiding are essential to daily behaviour and life:

The survival value of this peculiar behavior is evident: the animal makes sure, from time to time, that it has not lost its way and that it can, at a moment's notice, retreat to one place it knows to be safe (Appleton 1996, p. 64).

Perhaps that is why, when we are not intentionally hiding and we find ourselves in thick fog, we feel the urge to keep moving to retrieve our sense of direction and find our way.

The fundamental nature of fog is such that it scatters light so there is not a single beam but rather a more even dispersion. When enveloped by fog it is difficult to grasp the nature of this phenomenon due to limited visibility. To understand the formation and scope of a fogbank requires distance, in order to see it in the context of the surrounding landscape.

To be within thick turbidity is confusing and a sense of direction, size and nearness to other objects is warped by impaired vision. The act of looking 'through' thick turbidity evokes a vastly different feeling to the act of looking 'up' to the sky. As Richard Hamblyn suggests, to look up into distant and vast space can invoke dreams and 'visions of a possible future' (2001, p. 40). He further refers to Descartes' statement that we are filled with wonder and awe when we perceive things that are high above us, in direct comparison to those at the same level, or even below us (p. 29). The sky has always been seen to contain mysteries, such as gods, life rhythms and prophecies; and, at the least, has been a vehicle for imagination and wonder. Low-level turbidity or fog, on the other hand, is an ephemeral place often representing insecurity, loss and potential threat.

An interesting installation developed by Atelier Chan Chan titled *Urban Fog* was developed in response 'to a derelict, walled and hidden pocket of empty space in Dalston, and a wider investigation into escape, transparency, and thresholds' (Pike 2011). This site-specific temporary teahouse, directed by Zoe Chan in conjunction with other designers, represents her practice of making works that exist in the space between art and architecture. The result was a momentary community created in what was previously a derelict building and:

The long trajectory of the space is seen as a journey for the body and the eye, like a series of foggy cinematic frames capturing increasing levels of private space. Like entering a lost cloud which has temporarily come to rest in this urban void, figures appear and disappear within the depth of the space and become distorted through light and shadow (Pike 2011).

The installation took advantage of a long space and the design utilised a series of hidden rooms that were simultaneously private and public (Figure 43). It is reminiscent of the *Blind Light* installation by Antony Gormley in that people seemed to appear and then vanish, and the boundary walls were substantial one moment and seemed temporal the next. Both installations also had a theatrical aspect that involved both participant and observer.



Figure 43: Atelier Chan Chan, *Urban Fog*, 2011

*Urban Fog* allowed for what Jay Appleton calls ‘nebulous refuges’, even if they are artificial, not natural. Appleton’s typical refuges include fog, mist and low cloud cover on mountaintops, and he also says that light is linked to a prospect, while darkness and refuge are co-existent. To be in darkness is to not be seen, and therefore darkness and refuge equal a hiding place for a fugitive (1996, pp. 97–100). In this instance, darkness, or thick cloud that hampers visibility, can be seen as benevolent rather than ominous. Mist, in particular, can be seen as a more hopeful phenomenon than fog, perhaps due to an expanded field of vision:

The mist that had been as thick as sorrow became tenuous and frail ... The light grew yet stronger ... Gradually, with the same

mysterious slowness with which night had changed to day,  
towers rose out of the mist (p. 193).

Being enveloped by fog and mist is something that most people have experienced, but it is much harder to tangibly experience high cloud, unless you are skydiving or floating in a hot-air balloon. Even then, the experience is transitory, liminal and difficult to grasp, similar to an attempt to capture turbid atmosphere.

In many cases fog and mist, in particular, appear as bands or layers stretching over the landscape. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari regard this phenomenon as essential in providing form to matter, and further state that: 'Strata are acts of capture' (1987, p. 45). While they are referring to a geological view of landscape, ephemeral atmospheric states could also be a form of strata – indeed, fog and mist are classified as 'stratus' clouds. The etymological definition of stratus refers to a 'spreading out' (Webster 1913, p. 1423) and therefore if matter is something that flows, or is an elastic form (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 51), then an embodiment of this particular definition of matter could be turbidity.

It is extremely difficult to capture elastic and fluid form, and generally artists who have an interest in harnessing transient phenomena have had to create them artificially. Gormley, Gleave and Nakaya (referred to in Chapter 1) use photography as a method of documentation, as does Berndnaut Smilde, a Dutch artist who manufactured and subsequently captured cloud. Smilde's practice is generally situated in the discipline of making sculptures in indoor spaces. He uses smoke machines, dramatic lighting and moisture in a carefully controlled space to create

his clouds. Smilde's clouds question the interface between reality, representation and the feeling of being 'in-between' or liminality (Rosenberg 2013). This liminality is emphasised by the creation of clouds in an indoor environment rather than outside. The clouds that result are much more temporal than their naturally formed counterparts and consequently they have to be photographed quickly, before they dissipate. This is in direct contrast to the considerable amount of time taken to set up the site for both the making of the cloud as well as the preparation for photographing the event.



Figure 44: Berndnaut Smilde, *Nimbus Platform 57*, 2012

Smilde captures fleeting moments and there is a duality present in these events: the moment of the transient nature of the clouds in comparison to the 'captured' or photographic image revealed after the event. Also, the metaphysical connections that historically link humans and the sky are compared to the scientifically manufactured clouds, which rely on specific thermal conditions. One is mystic and romantic, the other is

clinical and carefully constructed. To create a cloud, Smilde first moistens the air, which will stop the cloud falling apart and keep it suspended at the desired height, and then he uses a smoke machine to blast a small amount of fog into the moisture, which results in a cloud. By using backlighting, the cloud takes on the appearance of a raincloud as can be seen in the work, *Nimbus Platform 57* (Figure 44).

Samantha Clark is interested in 'stars and their interspaces' (Watkins 2007) and regards objectivity, and the desire to make sense of our world, as creative processes. She responds to environmental issues by engaging with the natural surrounds, albeit through the construction of unnatural clouds. Clark's clouds are constructed manually, using polyfibre filling as the main material, and then arranged in an interior space (Figure 45).



Figure 45: Samantha Clark, *Cloud Chamber*, 2007

Clark is concerned with understanding the natural world in order to better comprehend self. The subject and the observer, the physical and the aesthetic, are thus inextricably linked, and the space between them behaves as a visual bridge or connection. There is also an element of



play in the installation. Clark arranges her 'clouds' in each exhibition space and this reinforces patternmaking, and points of connection and intersection become evident when viewing *Cloud Chamber* from a distance.

A series of *Cloud Play* paintings I completed in August–September 2012 (Figure 46) has connections to Clark's clouds and to the use of photography. These paintings represent my early efforts to 'capture' clouds and, while they are not photographically based, they are displayed as light-boxes, which have a strong connection to photography. Additionally, turbid conditions act as a type of soft box, further reinforcing the connection, as turbidity has the effect of dispersing light. The inspiration behind these works was to try to emulate the ephemeral and luminous beauty of cloudscape, inspired by the airplane flight to Flinders Island in 2011. Initially, the paintings were made as separate images on clear polycarbonate sheets and then assembled together on a painted background or 'sky'. These were disappointing as they were clumsy and awkward and not reminiscent of the atmospheric phenomena with which I had become enamoured. By removing the background painting and placing the transparent sheets of polycarbonate against a light source, the effect was remarkable, demonstrating the importance of light in the portrayal of turbidity. As a result, the polycarbonate sheets were fixed in the front of the box frame with a battery-powered light placed in a corner behind, to emulate natural atmosphere.



Figure 46: Helene Weeding, *Cloud Play*, April 2012

The different layers that comprise this work suggest permeability of the cloud surface, as well as the depth behind the amorphous forms.

The importance of light to view and understand the atmosphere was also realised by UK-based artist, scientist, musician and composer, Jem Finer. The construction of a large spiral tower as part of 'Oxford 2005', called *The Centre of the Universe*, is both a sculptural object and a working radio telescope (Figure 47). Finer discovered, through the course of living in the shed at the base of the installation, that:

I suddenly realised that to look at the universe and find connections with it, it's not actually necessary to stick your head up into space at all. That came about because the place I'd sit had very beautiful light in it, and the way the shadows passed across the room during the day was very beautiful. I realised that one of the most direct ways of engaging with the universe is right there in front of you – there's this light source which is in fact a star, and we're spinning around it on this sphere (Rooney 2007).

In an interview with David Rooney, Finer also said he was interested in expanding the landscape as he felt it had been cropped and framed by painters. His idea was to build a simple yet huge sculpture; with legs reaching into the sky so that the ends were invisible from the ground. The legs would support a 'horizontal rectangular frame' that would

enclose 'the most beautiful, ever-changing, un-containable show of clouds' (2007). At the time, he couldn't envision how it would be built but I am sure that hasn't stopped Finer from working on a draft design proposal, abstract or not.



Figure 47: Jem Finer, *The Centre of the Universe*, 2005–2007

Just as complex and inspiring is a proposal by Yeonkyu Park, Kwon Han, Hyeyeon Kwon and Hojeong Lim. Called *The Mist Tree* (Figure 48), the design is intended to capture fog to provide much-needed water to the Atacama Desert in Chile. This desert is one of the driest places in the world and is bordered on each side by high mountains, which prevent airborne moisture from the Pacific Ocean reaching it. The idea is to construct a skyscraper building directly into the Andes mountain range, in an attempt to harness and consequently capture thick turbidity named the 'Camanchaca', which originates in the Pacific Ocean. This could, if put into effect, relieve the extreme drought in the Atacama Desert, where in some places it has not rained for more than 350 years.

*The Mist Tree's* design is based on a net-like façade, similar to a spider's web, which in nature captures moist air readily and:

allows the moisture to build up on the structure. To make this happen, the building is heated on the interior using sunlight captured by large glass openings. Once the moisture

accumulates, it is fed down the 'tree' and into the Atacama area to provide water (Lofgren 2013).



Figure 48: Yeonkyu Park, Kwon Han, Hyeyeon Kwon and Hojeong Lim, *The Mist Tree*, 2013

Atmospheric conditions, sustainability and climate change are the impetus behind much of Lesley Duxbury's artwork. Duxbury also investigates the natural environment: atmospheric phenomena, and the viewer's perception of what is observed.

The photographic work *Where There's Smoke* (2010, Figure 49) recalls Duxbury's interest in pollution and its effect on both mental and physical health. This has its origins in the devastating event in Europe that killed thousands and stimulated today's environmental movement: The Great Smog of 1952. In December 1952, excessive burning of coal to ward off freezing conditions caused by a cold fog, coupled with factory emissions and the introduction of diesel-fuelled buses, saw a dramatic rise in air pollutants. The tragic result was the immediate deaths of 4,000 people, closely followed by another 8,000 in the weeks and months afterwards. Being aware of the act of inhaling air and breathing out is one of Duxbury's preoccupations, together with her stated goal to:

... explore the potential for art to influence behavior and attitudes towards climate change by linking atmosphere and emotions through artistic representations (2012, p. 34).



Figure 49: Lesley Duxbury, *Where There's Smoke #24*, 2010

While my work does not directly address climate politics, it does examine the link between the experience of dense or thick atmosphere and subsequent artistic and emotional responses. Exploration of the atmosphere and how it can affect our emotional state, imagination and personal experience has been an underlying motivation in both researching and writing this exegesis. The artwork that informs this project reflects an investigation into turbid qualities such as their formation through bands or layers, light dispersal and capture. Additionally, the experience of being amid a turbid space has been discussed as transitory and liminal, combined with the importance of being able to see to appreciate fully the beauty inherent in thick or dense cloud; in other words, 'the light of life' (Galloway 2012, p. 161).

## CONCLUSION

Alexander Galloway, in a discussion about Martin Heidegger and his understanding of lumen (light), stated that Heidegger evoked the 'light of life ... the light of this world experienced through passage and illumination' (2012, p.161) and further elucidated that a phenomenon such as fog 'transforms a space of absolute co-ordinates into a proximal zone governed by thresholds of intelligibility' and is experiential (p.162). Even though turbidity such as fog does not emit its own light, it is a carrier and transmitter of light from other places. Turbid atmosphere contains water and refracts light as it enters the atmosphere and then again as it departs, which Galloway believes is both 'subjective and experientially deep' (p.165). My intention when making artwork for this project was to visually penetrate a space where depth is an illusion but the experience of place somehow becomes real, the closer and longer the viewer takes to look. The effect I was aiming for was similar to peeling back the layers of turbid bands as one would peel an onion, layer by layer, in a continual dissolve, so no centre could be easily revealed or was immediately accessible.

In March 2014, I set up a small work-in-progress exhibition for critique. I had made a series of bushfire paintings that my supervisors subsequently did not regard as reflecting turbidity adequately, while they unanimously embraced my paintings of dense cloud that I was unsure of. The result of this meeting was that I should try to develop

these cloud studies even further and make them as large as possible, so the viewer felt enveloped by the clouds. This made me nervous as I had tried to paint an entire 10-metre roll of paper in 2010, during my MFA study, and had found it extremely difficult to translate a smaller work into a much larger painting while retaining the essential characteristics that made the small study successful. To say I was filled with trepidation would be an understatement. Regardless, I ordered the paper and tried to think how I would approach such a mammoth task: Would I use mops to apply the ink? How would I keep it wet so I could work on it? Did I need to ask family or friends for assistance when I decided to start? If the floor were a bit bumpy, would it show up on the paper? These were just a few of the questions that preoccupied me.

Two weeks later I travelled to see the Red Queen Exhibition at MONA. On the ferry trip I was seated in the common area, which was separated from the 'Posh Pit' by a pane of black glass. The glass had been drawn on with white pen on both sides and I became interested in the subtle shift between the images on the two opposite sides and the depth they conveyed. I decided to try to translate some of my experiments to acrylic sheets. After experimenting with adhering colour photocopies on transparent film to acrylic sheets (which was not a great result as they were too opaque and the result was clumsy), I contacted a printing company called Think Big in Launceston. By using two sheets of acrylic, one printed in full colour value and the other, which was printed in half-tones, placed over the top, I could achieve the desired depth. Also, by placing a mirrored board behind both sheets, reflected light began to emanate from the work and I started to feel excitement and optimism. A

bonus was that the images I had originally painted by hand could be reproduced and printed onto an entire sheet of acrylic (240 x 120 cm) if desired. I now felt I was able to make my cloud studies 'experientially deep' as Galloway puts it (2012, p. 165), and bring the viewer into my turbidity more successfully, so that the experience became more intimate, in contrast to standing at a distance and being kept there. It also solved very neatly the problem of how to make my cloud studies larger without losing the subtle sensitivity of the smaller pieces and the issue of a borderless painting was resolved.

As discussed in the Introduction (p. 5), I was intent on making the sky a dominant feature because it has been willfully ignored, or taken for granted, by many artists in the past. I wanted to make artwork that would give the viewer a jolt of awareness of what is often overlooked, as well as an experience of immersion. Through initially using fluid materials such as ink and watercolour paint on wet paper, movement implicit in the experience of turbidity is replicated to a degree. When it is then translated into a print onto acrylic sheets and mirrored board, it seems as though the movement is suspended and it acts as a liminal moment, evocative of the works of Rosemary Laing's *Flight research #5* (Figure 37) and Michael Riley's *Untitled* (Figure 31).

In *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, Jeff Malpas states that :

No experiential space can properly be said to be an objective space, since any experiential space is a space with a clear ordering derived from the location, bodily configuration, perceptual capacities and capacities for movement of the experiencing creature and which are always implicated in any



grasp of the ordering supplied within such a space (1999, p. 59).

He further elucidates that 'objective and subjective space are irreducibly distinct notions' and that while subjective space is linked to experience, objective space is not, yet 'both seem to involve a notion of extension within some region – a notion that makes for the possibility of movement' (1999, p. 64). This is what I was trying to capture in the exhibition *Endless* (Sawtooth ARI Gallery, Launceston August 2014). The idea that a work that was essentially two-dimensional could portray a feeling of limitless movement was the motivation behind the two pieces on display. There were a few distractions that needed to be addressed (the hanging method was too obvious and the layers of acrylic and mirrored board kept separating, leaving a shadow), but generally the works had a distinct presence.



Figure 50: Helene Weeding, *Endless #1*, 2014

When *Endless #1* and *Endless #2* were hung in the space, their relationship to the spatial play of the Baroque master, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770) became apparent. Tiepolo was known for his

saturated and sparkling sunlight, endless fluidity, and interesting illusionistic space, complete with figures apparently floating on clouds.

(Tiepolo's) Perspective ... floats human forms at varying distances from the observer across a celestial limitlessness, at points on and around both the drapes and clouds ... (MacFayden 1998, p. 180).

MacFayden's phrase 'celestial limitlessness' is one I responded to, as the motivation behind the works in *Endless*. The aim of the whole project was to arouse in the viewer feelings of entering a turbid skyscape and being enveloped, echoing my original response to flying above the clouds on route to Flinders Island in 2011. Further works resulted in 2015 that omitted the use of a mirrored board in favour of a hand-painted composite board. This had the advantage of making each work unique and reinstated my involvement with the paintings. The awkward framing technique of silver bolts at intervals in the works was also discarded and the transition to fusing the composite board and acrylic sheet was achieved as in Figure 51.



Figure 51: Helene Weeding, *Liminal Landscape #1*, 2015

In addition, by placing the *Liminal Landscape* series leading into, and away from, a corner, reference is drawn to Monet's *Nymphéas (Water Lilies)* in the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, where the oval-shaped

rooms make the paintings elliptical and seem to surround the viewer. While Monet was committed to adopting an analytic and objective approach to his landscape paintings, to me they are eminently subjective, as they recall intimate spatial knowledge and understanding of the subject, particularly at the end of Monet's life when his sight was failing. Perhaps at this time Monet felt a similar liminal sensation to the participants of the thick fog of *Blur Building* (Figure 8) and *Blind Light* (Figure 9), suspended between safety and precarious threat, enclosed in an amorphous and edgeless space, with familiar landscape subjects he had previously experienced hovering on the outer limits of his vision. These outer limits can be felt as a suspension between earth and sky, humans and landscape.

Architects Rahm and Zumthor want to build (literally) on the connection between humans and landscape by incorporating air and flow into their designs so that, in Zumthor's case, the result is an 'experience-based village' (Rosenfield 2013). The flow of air introduces a quiet presence, which directly compares with Eliasson's recreated emphasis on ephemeral atmospheric conditions, resulting in an almost theatrical production. Smilde's manufactured clouds and Martin's *Sunpicture* likewise emanate drama and intensity compared to the quieter, but no less dramatic, depictions by Wolfhagen, Constable and Turner. While Nakaya's and Gleave's manmade fogs introduce a more intimate experience of a 'specific sense of place' (Nogué I Font 1993, p. 166), they rely on personal experience and connection to the landscape, which, according to Malpas, 'also gives shape and form' (2011, p. xi).

While many of the artists investigated in this project have been predominantly interested in the atmosphere, artists and writers have historically overlooked sky and weather. Weather, incorporating sky and cloud, continues to be regarded as a background to contemporary daily life, despite major weather events occurring with more frequency and intensity each year. Perhaps it is because we are participants in weather that we don't see it, hence the need for distance.

Merleau-Ponty stated that to understand perception, distance is required. It is impossible to disregard the enormity and blinding effect of Eliasson's *Weather Project*, which makes us aware of nature's awesome power, coupled with a sense of impending disaster. Eliasson's clever use of a dramatic and all-powerful sun reduces us to insignificance and makes us 'attend to the limits of perception' (Varnedoe 2006, p. 116). In a much less obvious way, the works of Turrell and Bailey force our perception by a subtle use of quiet turbidity and the implied suspension of movement and time: one that is liminal. These works relate, for me, to Deleuze and Guattari's view that the experience of liminality refers to a state of suspended movement in-between layers, which accords with my belief about the inherent qualities present in turbidity.

My experience of turbidity has undoubtedly influenced my approach to entering such a space. I fear being lost inside it, and the loss of sound, boundaries and vision are mitigating factors. While attending Hentschlagel's *ZEE*, I felt disoriented and had to reacquaint myself with solid forms after leaving the space. The sense of relief I felt

is best described by Lorenz (Appleton 1996, p. 62), who regarded loss of place and the ensuing retrieval as essential components of daily living. For this type of retrieval, movement is implicit. This does not mean we have to move, but the landscape can move around us, even if it is subtle. The act of looking up to the sky can, as Hamblyn suggests, summon 'visions of a possible future' (2001, p. 40). This possible future inspires and motivates me, and I am joined in this view by Duxbury, whose ultimate goal is to bring attention to the need to influence attitudes and behaviour towards the devastating effects of climate change 'by linking atmosphere and emotions through artistic representations' (2012, p. 34); a subjective experience.

I have discovered that being immersed in turbidity is generally an uncomfortable experience, even if it is non-threatening (as when entering Nakaya's fog sculptures). The desire to keep moving so that it can be viewed from a 'safe' distance and to reinstate a sense of direction is implicit in this movement. Likewise, dense or thick atmosphere limits visibility so effectively that even if I agree with Lorenz that losing place and retrieving it are vital to both humans and animals (Appleton 1996, p. 64), I still instinctively try to extricate myself from a turbid space. This is the reason I have made works that quietly draw the observer in, yet are viewed from a distance so they can be experienced in the context of the surrounds.

While turbidity can be tangible, and is visible, it is simultaneously elusive and ephemeral. My experience of turbid space combines a certain degree of anxious expectation before entering, as well as an

inherent desire to escape. It is the breakdown of visual clarity to somewhere liminal and ambiguous that signifies intangibility and endless distance for me. Distance and atmosphere are ever present when the huge scope of the universe is considered. In August 2015, I visited the Parkes Radio Telescope in New South Wales and was astounded by images of nebula taken from the Hubble Telescope that were shown in the Parkes telescope's theatre. I felt an echo of familiarity, or kinship, with some of the paintings I have been producing. I can only imagine where this might lead, given another three years of investigation.

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## APPENDIX

### Assessment Exhibition: Reflection

Hanging the final works for assessment was an exercise in patience. The major wall of works titled *Weather Rhythm* (Figures 10 & 11), comprised 176 works (50 x 30 cm each), which I was unable to trial prior to assessment due to the unavailability of the gallery as well as the sheer number of works to hang. The final hang was a pleasant surprise. Even though I placed the works on the floor of the gallery, to judge the effect and each work's relationship to another, I was unprepared for the full effect of the entire body of paintings when it was complete. That feeling only lasted for a day, as the Velcro dots (the method of attachment to the walls), were repelled by the fresh paint on the wall and they began to fall in increments of one or two. After taking all of them down I began again by stapling the top two dots to the wall but even then, over the course of the next week, a few continued to slip off the wall. In hindsight, I think that Velcro strips would have worked much better and I will implement this approach when I rehang the works in the future.

Facing *Weather Rhythm* was a series titled *Liminal Landscape 1-5* (Figures 19 & 20). These works were very large and only fully completed in the month prior to the hang. Similar to *Weather Rhythm*, I was unable to trial hang the works due to the lack of availability of the specific Academy Gallery space, which they were designed for. I did make a maquette of the gallery and pasted images onto the spaces in it,

but the reality of the experience was quite different. To begin with, the images I had to work with were reversed, and therefore the joining up of the five paintings were the complete opposite of what I had expected. I had to adjust accordingly but ended up being very satisfied with the final result. Instead of the paintings being spaced close together, one was kept slightly separate while the other four were grouped in two pairs, with one pair placed in the corner. They produced the immersive atmosphere I was striving to achieve.

The outer entry gallery wall was the final work to be hung (Figure 5). The *Cloud study* series (212 small works on paper) proceeded without any fuss and once again, I was pleased with the end product. They added context to the bodies of work inside the main gallery and provided a more intimate understanding of my days in the studio.

### List of works

1. Entry gallery wall: Figures 1 - 5

*Cloud Study* (series of 212), August 2013- November 2015,  
acrylic paint, white pen and pen on paper, (h) 14 x (w) 19 cm each

2. Main gallery wall facing the entry: Figures 6 - 14

*Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015,  
ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board,  
(h) 30 x (w) 50 cm each

3. Main gallery walls opposite *Weather Rhythm*: Figures 15 - 22

*Liminal landscape* (series of 5), September - November 2015,  
ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board,  
(h) 1200 x (w) 1600 cm each



1. Entry gallery wall:



Figure 1: Stack of Cloud study (series of 212), August 2013 - November 2015, acrylic, pencil, white pen on paper, (h) 14 x (w) 19cm each

1. Entry gallery wall:



Figures 2 & 3: Installation of Cloud study (series of 212), August 2013 - November 2015, acrylic, pencil, white pen on paper, (h) 14 x (w) 19 cm each

1. Entry gallery wall:

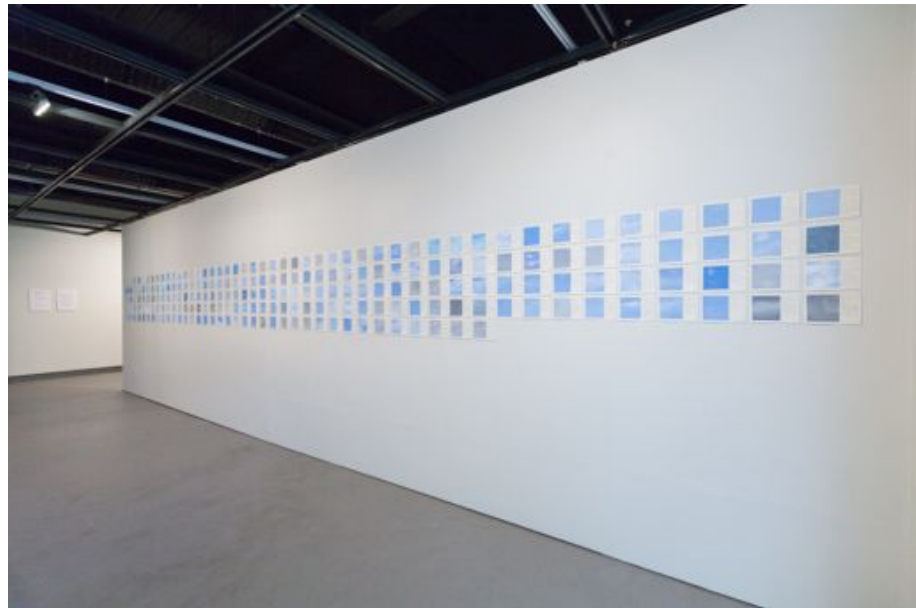


Figure 4: Cloud study (series of 212), August 2013 - November 2015, acrylic, pencil, white pen on paper, (h) 14 x (w) 19 cm each, detail of installation view

Figure 5: Cloud study (series of 212), August 2013 - November 2015, acrylic, pencil, white pen on paper, (h) 14 x (w) 19 cm each, installation view

2. Main gallery wall facing the entry:



Figures 6 & 7: Installation of *Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 30 x (w) 60 cm each

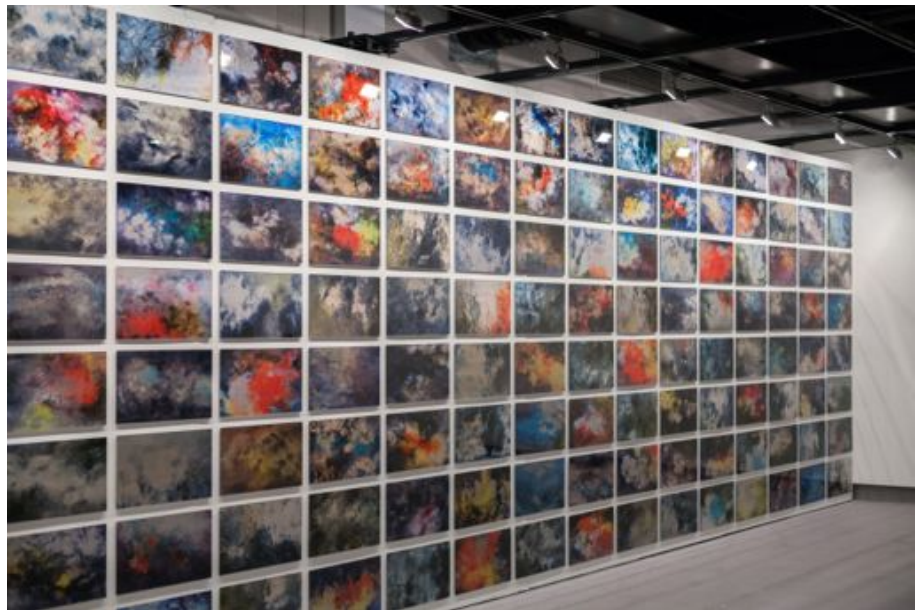
2. Main gallery wall facing the entry:



Figures 8 & 9: Installation of *Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 30 x (w) 60 cm each



2. Main gallery wall facing the entry:



Figures 10 & 11: *Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 30 x (w) 60 cm each, installation view

2. Main gallery wall facing the entry:



Figures 12 & 13: *Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 30 x (w) 60 cm each, details of installation view

2. Main gallery wall facing the entry:



Figure 14: *Weather Rhythm* (series of 176), August 2014 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 30 x (w) 60 cm each, detail of installation view



3. Main gallery walls opposite *Weather Rhythm*:



Figures 15 & 16: Installation of *Liminal Landscape* (series of 5), September 2015 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 1200 x (w) 1600 cm each

3. Main gallery walls opposite *Weather Rhythm*:



Figures 17 & 18: Installation of *Liminal Landscape* (series of 5), September 2015 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 1200 x (w) 1600 cm each

3. Main gallery walls opposite *Weather Rhythm*:



Figures 19 & 20: *Liminal Landscape* (series of 5), September 2015 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 1200 x (w) 1600 cm each, installation view

3. Main gallery walls opposite *Weather Rhythm*:



Figures 21 & 22: *Liminal Landscape* (series of 5), September 2015 - November 2015, ink, enamel paint, acrylic sheet, composite board (h) 1200 x (w) 1600 cm each, detail of installation view